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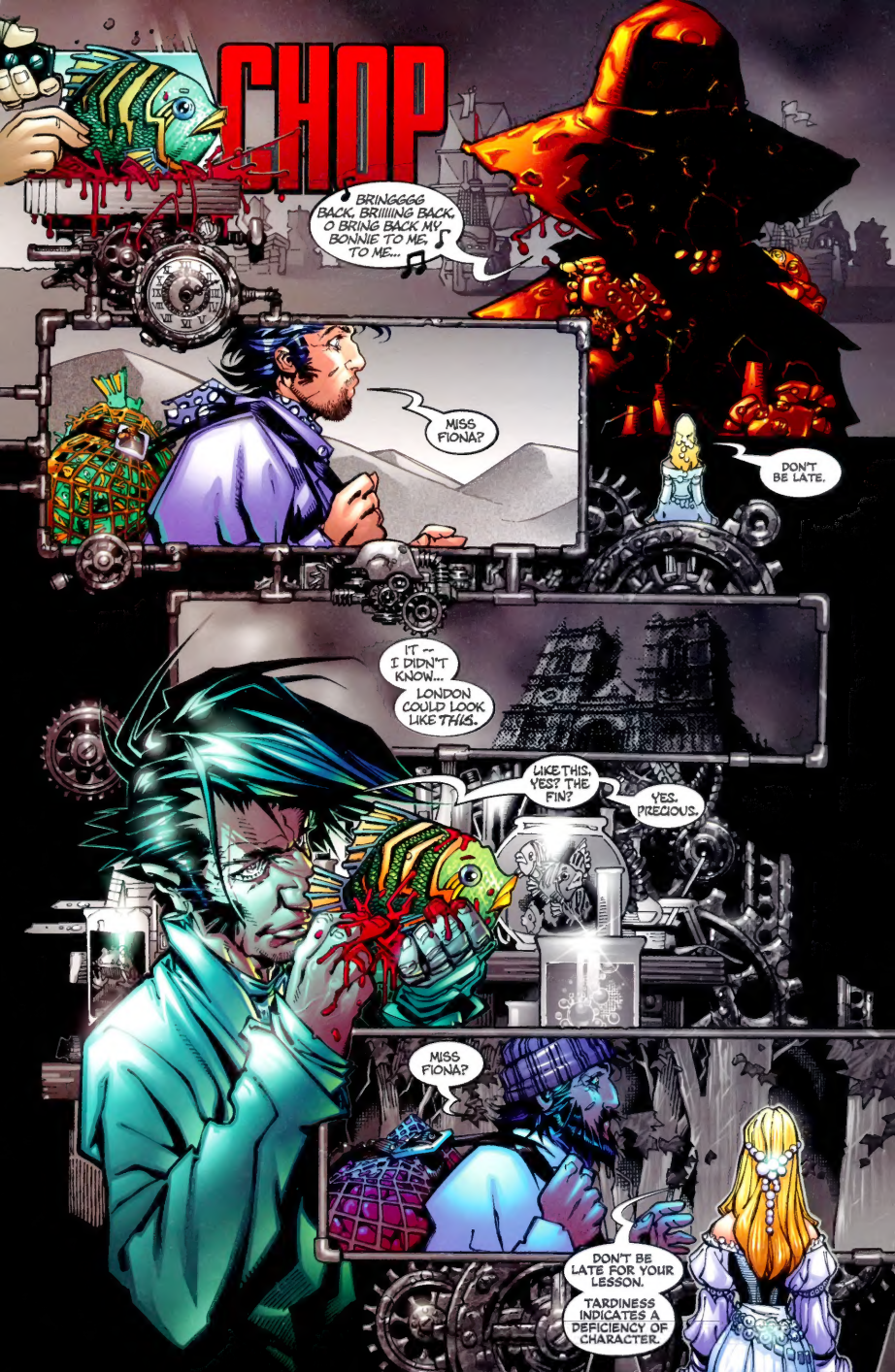
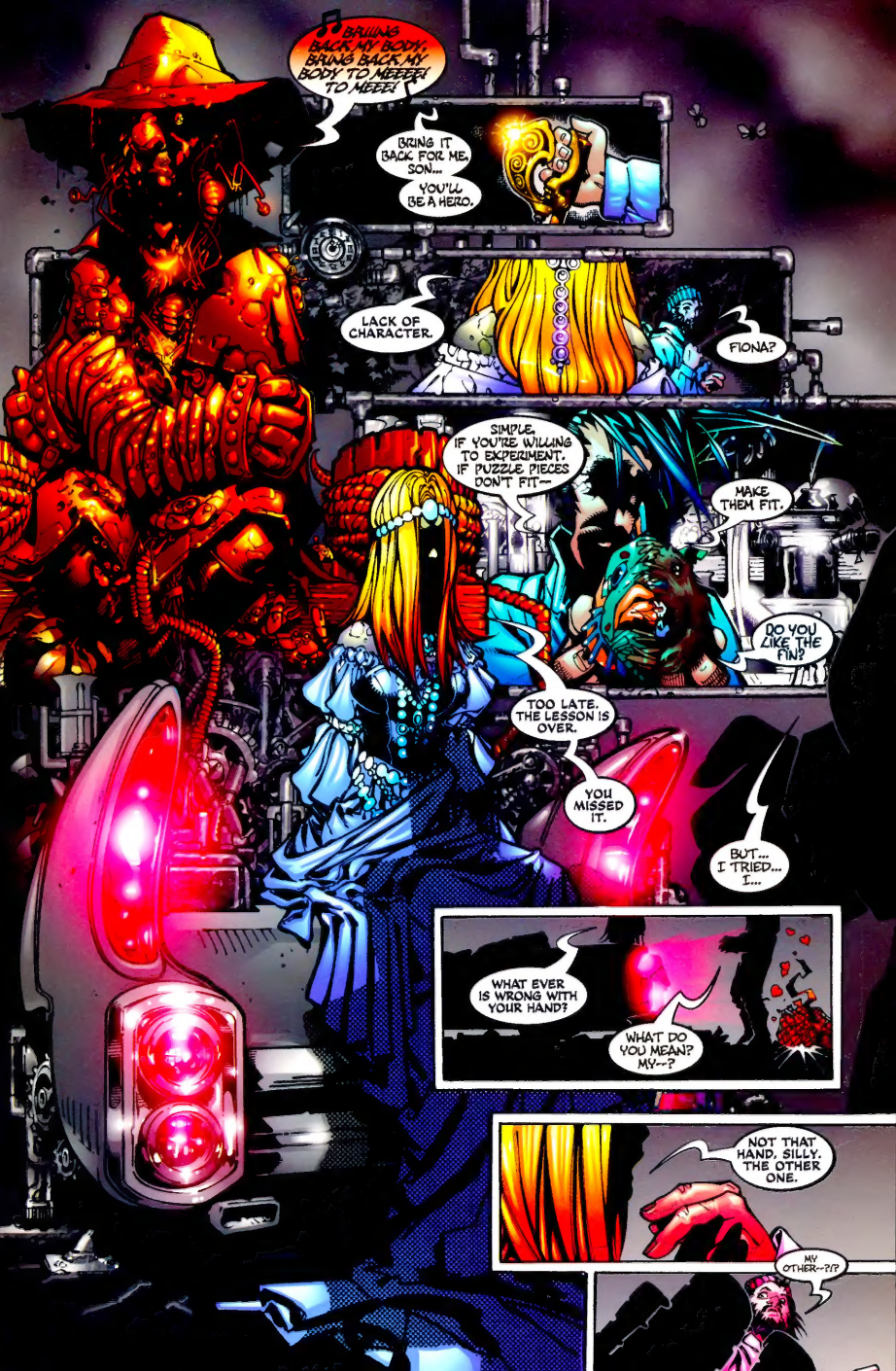

CHOP
BRINGGGG BACK. BRIIIIING BACK. O BRING BACK MY BONNIE TO ME. TO ME...
MISS FIONA?
DON'T BE LATE.
IT -- I DIDN'T KNOW... LONDON COULD LOOK LIKE THIS.
LIKE THIS. YES? THE FIN?
YES. PRECIOUS.
MISS FIONA?
DON'T BE LATE FOR YOUR LESSON.
TARDINESS INDICATES A DEFICIENCY OF CHARACTER.

THUS FAR, AS SEEN IN STEAMPUNK: CATECHISM...
As two thieves, Rabid Randy and Sköm, searched for marketable body parts in an ancient graveyard, their gropings uncover a mysterious stained glass coffin, which bursts open to a maelstrom of steam and fury, unleashing its inhabitant upon a sleeping London, and attracting the attention of two patrolling Dog Soldiers...


♪ BRINGS BACK MY BODY, BRING BACK MY BODY TO MEEEE! TO MEEE!
BRING IT BACK FOR ME, SON... YOU'LL BE A HERO.
LACK OF CHARACTER.
FIONA?
SIMPLE. IF YOU'RE WILLING TO EXPERIMENT. IF PUZZLE PIECES DON'T FIT—
MAKE THEM FIT.
DO YOU LIKE THE FIN?
TOO LATE. THE LESSON IS OVER.
YOU MISSED IT.
BUT... I TRIED... I...
WHAT EVER IS WRONG WITH YOUR HAND?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? MY--?
NOT THAT HAND, SILLY. THE OTHER ONE.
MY OTHER--?!?

STEAMPUNK #1.
April 2000.
WildStorm Productions,
Editorial Offices:
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La Jolla, CA 92037.
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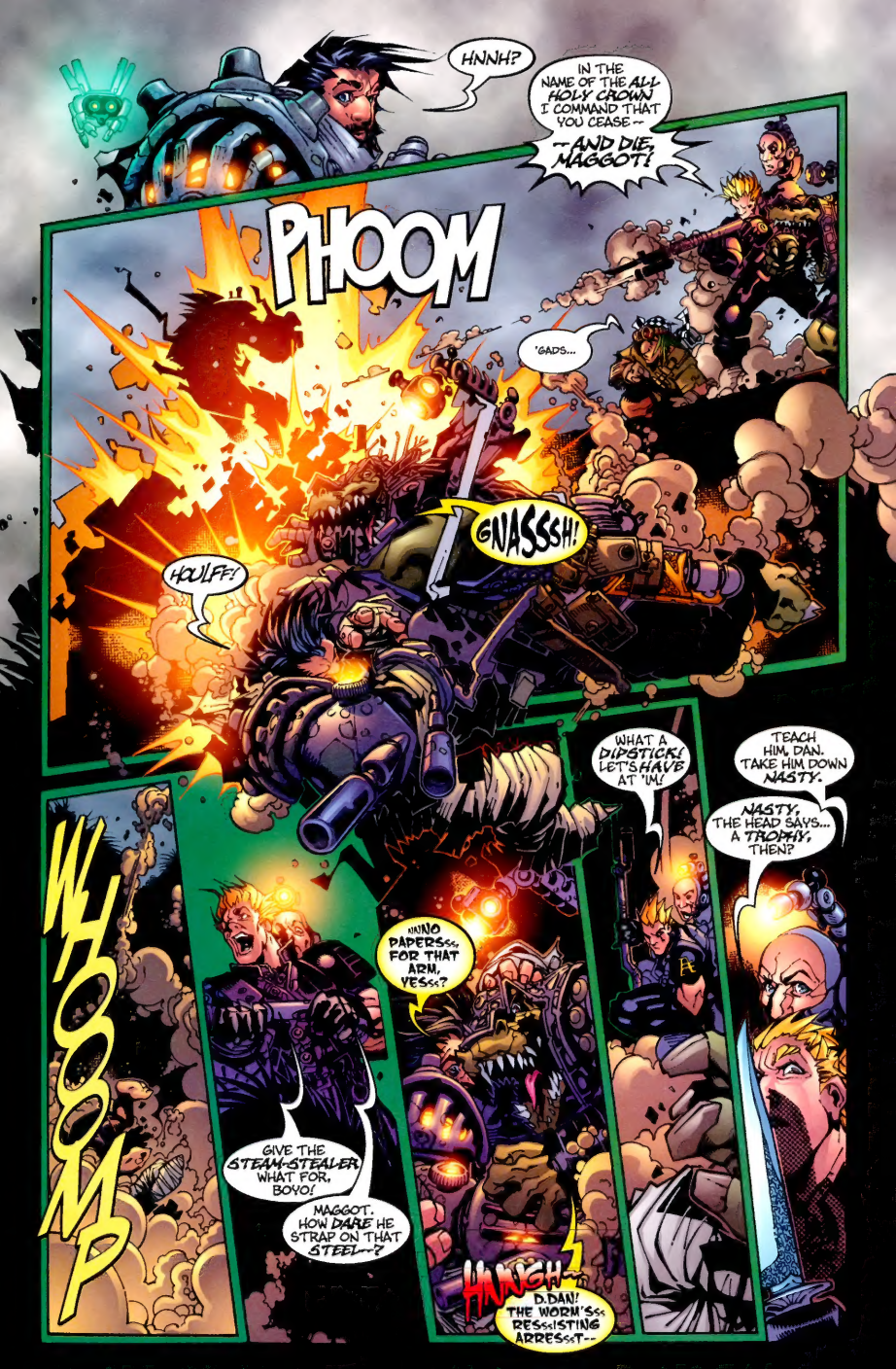
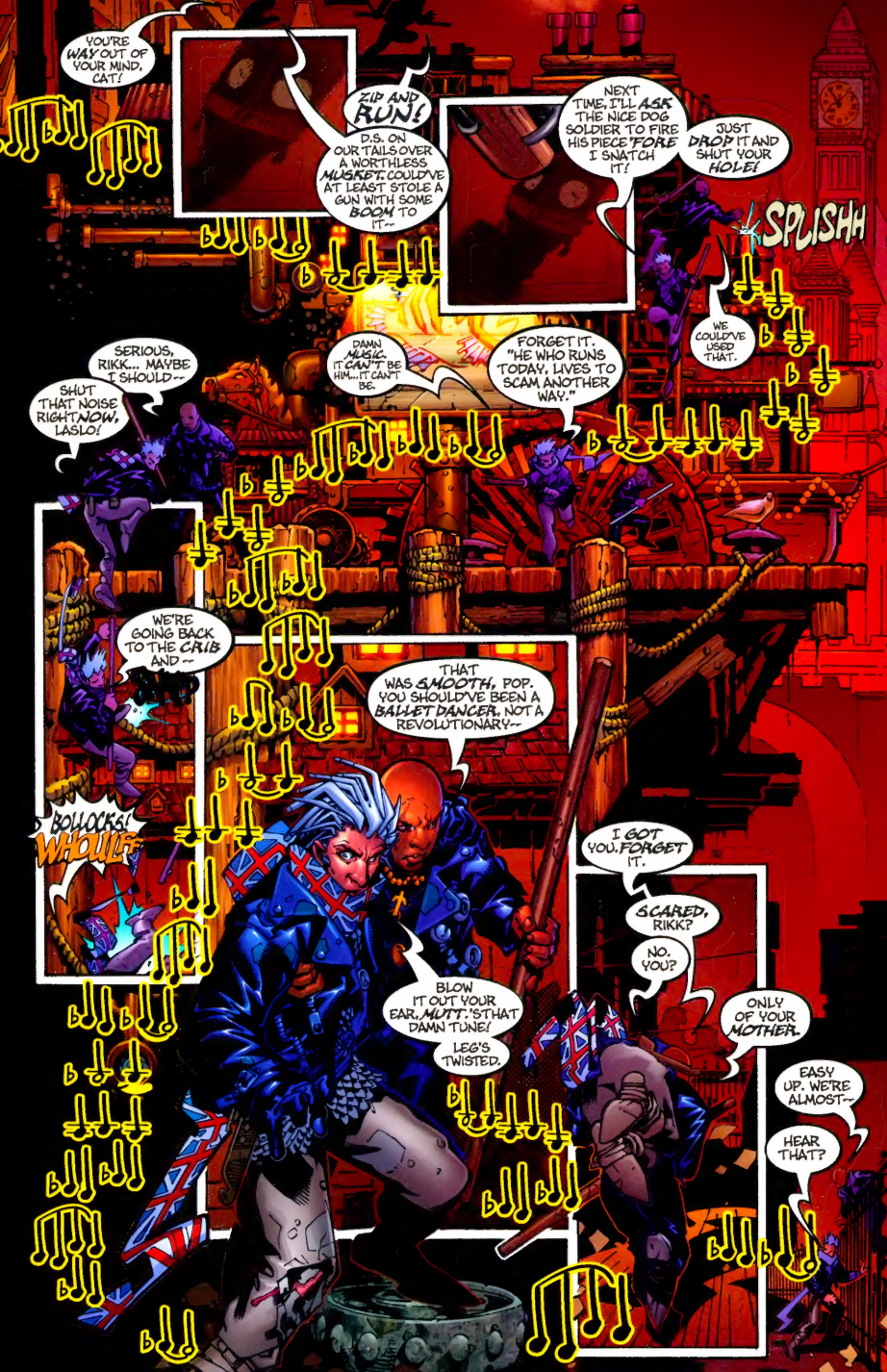
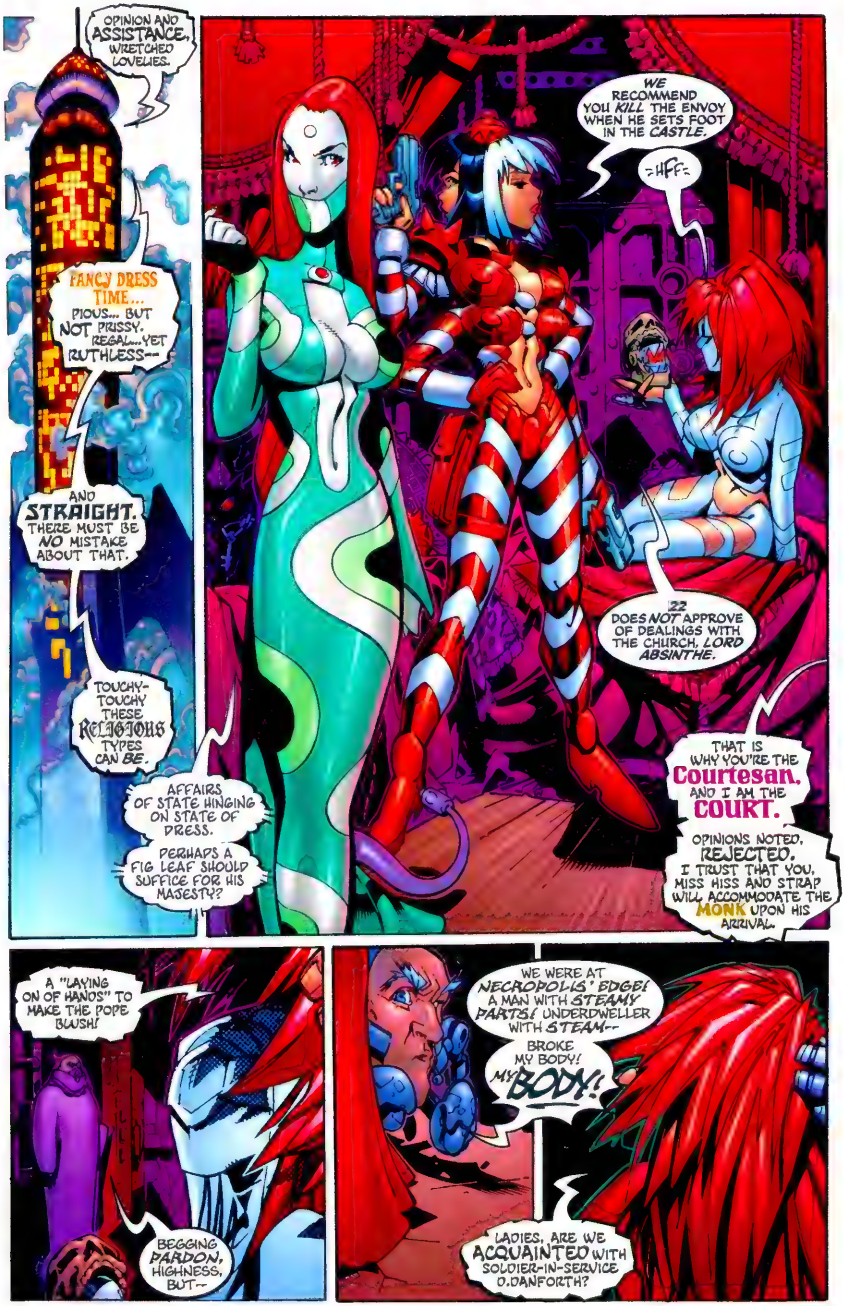

HNNH?
IN THE NAME OF THE ALL HOLY CROWN I COMMAND THAT YOU CEASE--
--AND DIE, MAGGOT!
PHOOM
'GADS...
GNASSSH!
HOULFF!
WHOOMP
WHAT A DIPSTICK! LET'S HAVE AT 'IM!
TEACH HIM, DAN. TAKE HIM DOWN NASTY.
NASTY, THE HEAD SAYS... A TROPHY, THEN?
NO PAPERSSS, FOR THAT ARM, YESSS?
GIVE THE STEAM-STEALER WHAT FOR, BOYO!
MAGGOT. HOW DARE HE STRAP ON THAT STEEL--?
HNNGH
D.DAN! THE WORM'SSS RESSSISTING ARRESSST--

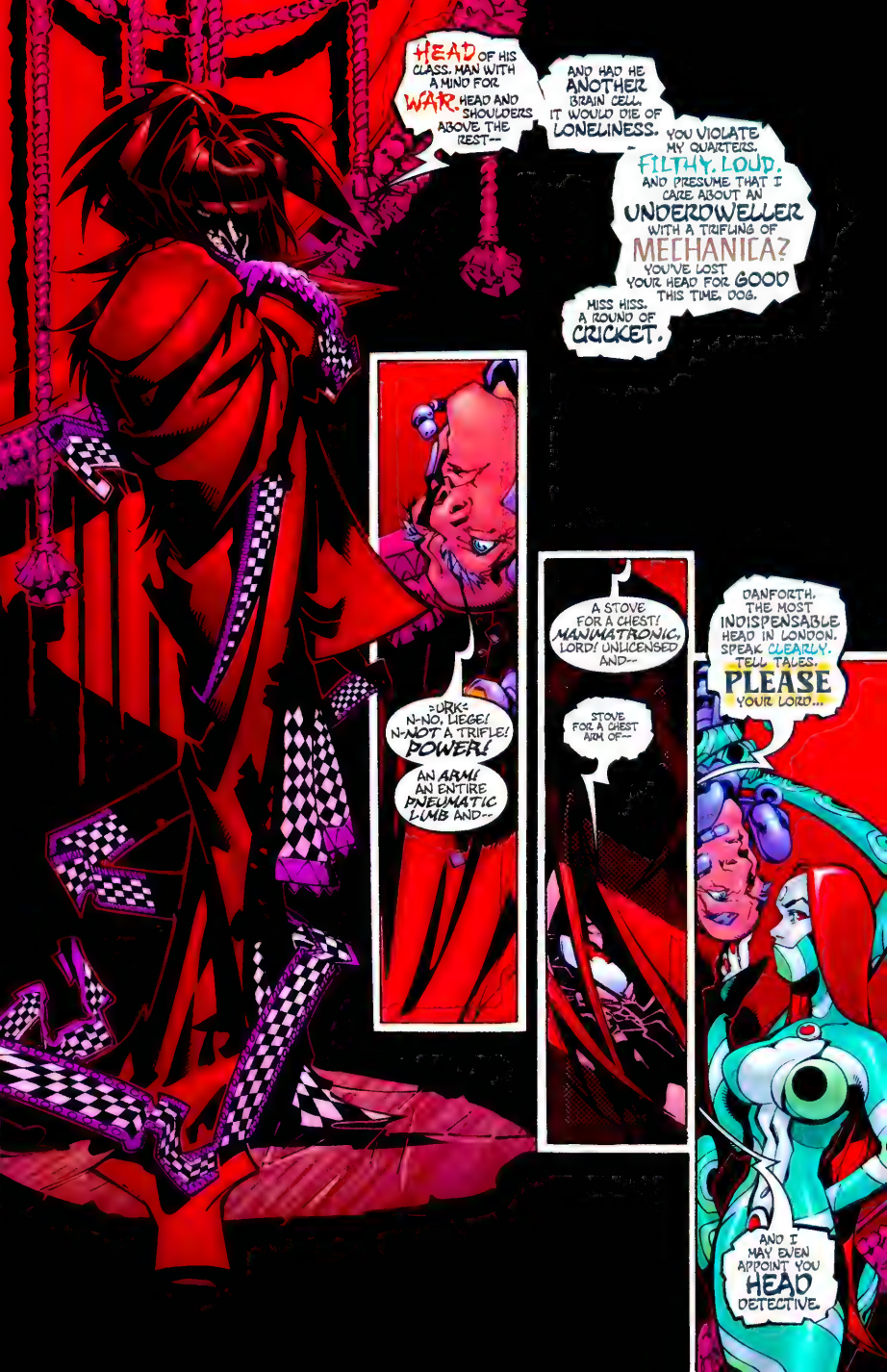
YE POOR SOD...
JUS' STOP SQUIRMIN', AN' LET THEM DO IT.
LITTLE FISSSSH, GUT LIKE A LITTLE FISSSSH--
YEEEAGH!
HMMF, I'LL BE...
GONE AN' WOKE UP A SCRAPPER, EH, RANDY BOY?
BA-MMF
DAN!!
SKRUNCH!
SSSSTRIKE USSS, SSSLIM? FACSSSE MY BLADE!
TING
PING
TNNG
KTING
tek
tek
tak
tak

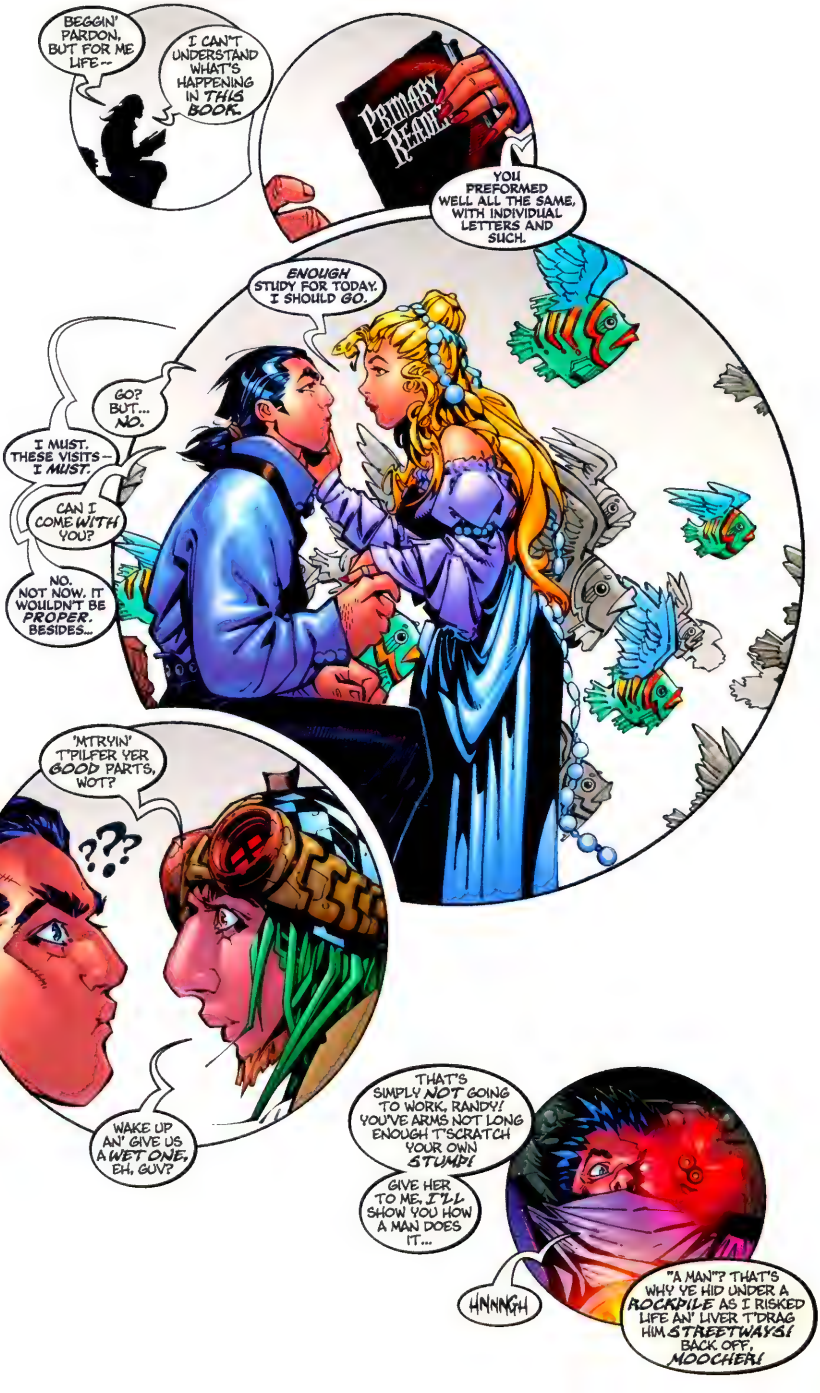
GREAT GODSMOT... LOOKIT 'IM.
BANG
POOM
ZAKA ZAKA
KLANGG
NOT DAN -- NO--
MORE TROOPS... NEED-- REPORT.
ALLIGGGHH!
OH... NOT A SCRAPPER AFTER ALL. SHAME.
MEBBE THEY LEF' A FEW SPARE PARTS--
FLING
PINCH ME BUM.
SCRUNCH
SSSSSSSS
HEH... WELL THEN... RIGHT GOOD FRACAS 'E GIVED YOU, EH--?
GRRRR
UH.. GUV'? HEH... I--
HOLYSCARY MOTHERTHYFACE... BLESSITINTHE SHOOT--
=URK=
PEDOT
PFFFFFFF
KLANG
HEH... CLOSE ONE, LORD... CLOSE.
I THINK I JUST GOT RICH.


YOU'RE WAY OUT OF YOUR MIND, CAT!
ZIP AND RUN!
D.S. ON OUR TAILS OVER A WORTHLESS MUGSHOT. COULD'VE AT LEAST STOLE A GUN WITH SOME BOOM TO IT--
NEXT TIME, I'LL ASK THE NICE DOG SOLDIER TO FIRE HIS PIECE 'FORE I SNATCH IT!
JUST DROP IT AND SHUT YOUR HOLE!
SPLISHH
WE COULD'VE USED THAT.
SERIOUS, RIKK... MAYBE I SHOULD--
SHUT THAT NOISE RIGHT NOW, LASLO!
DAMN MUSIC. IT CAN'T BE HIM... IT CAN'T BE.
FORGET IT. "HE WHO RUNS TODAY, LIVES TO SCAM ANOTHER WAY."
WE'RE GOING BACK TO THE CRIB AND --
THAT WAS SMOOTH, POP. YOU SHOULD'VE BEEN A BALLET DANCER, NOT A REVOLUTIONARY--
BOLLOCKS! WHOLLY--
I GOT YOU. FORGET IT.
SCARED, RIKK?
NO. YOU?
ONLY OF YOUR MOTHER.
BLOW IT OUT YOUR EAR, MUTT. 'STHAT DAMN TUNE!
LEG'S TWISTED.
EASY UP. WE'RE ALMOST--
HEAR THAT?

MUSIC'S DEAD.
'COURSE IT IS.
OL' MAN REMEMBERED WHO HE WAS DEAL-IN' WITH AN' GAVE UP.
VIVA REVOLUTION, BABY.
FAUST NEVER GIVES UP.
FAUST? PLAY IT FOR SOMEONE ELSE, RIKK. I'M TOO OLD FOR TERROR TALES.
THAT WAS SOME FAT OFF DOG SOLDIER WITH A BIT OF IMAGINATION AND A FLUTE.
THAT WASN'T...
...
GO GO GO!!
THAT WAS.
GOD SAVE 'M!
L-LASLO? MY LEG--
SCHIFF
CORRECTION...
MY LEG.
RIKK--?
RIKK!!
REMIND THEM, UNDERDWELLER. YOU BELONG TO YOUR LORD ABSINTHE...
BODY AND SOUL. FAUST COMES FOR ALL IN TIME.
W-WHY CAN'T I FEEL... MY ARMS AND... OH GOD...
OH GOD!


OPINION AND ASSISTANCE, WRETCHED LOVELIES.
FANCY DRESS TIME... PIOUS... BUT NOT PRISSY. REGAL... YET RUTHLESS--
AND STRAIGHT. THERE MUST BE NO MISTAKE ABOUT THAT.
TOUCHY-TOUCHY THESE RELIGIOUS TYPES CAN BE.
AFFAIRS OF STATE HINGING ON STATE OF DRESS.
PERHAPS A FIG LEAF SHOULD SUFFICE FOR HIS MAJESTY?
WE RECOMMEND YOU KILL THE ENVOY WHEN HE SETS FOOT IN THE CASTLE.
-HFF-
22 DOES NOT APPROVE OF DEALINGS WITH THE CHURCH, LORD ABSINTHE.
THAT IS WHY YOU'RE THE COURTESAN, AND I AM THE COURT.
OPINIONS NOTED. REJECTED. I TRUST THAT YOU, MISS HISS AND STRAP WILL ACCOMMODATE THE MONK UPON HIS ARRIVAL.
A "LAYING ON OF HANDS" TO MAKE THE POPE BLUSH!
BEGGING PARDON, HIGHNESS, BUT--
WE WERE AT NECROPOLIS' EDGE! A MAN WITH STEAMY PARTS! UNDERDWELLER WITH STEAM--
BROKE MY BODY! MY BODY!
LADIES, ARE WE ACQUAINTED WITH SOLDIER-IN-SERVICE O.DANFORTH?


HEAD OF HIS CLASS. MAN WITH A MIND FOR WAR. HEAD AND SHOULDERS ABOVE THE REST--
AND HAD HE ANOTHER BRAIN CELL, IT WOULD DIE OF LONELINESS.
YOU VIOLATE MY QUARTERS. FILTHY. LOUD. AND PRESUME THAT I CARE ABOUT AN UNDERWELLER WITH A TRIFLING OF MECHANICA? YOU'VE LOST YOUR HEAD FOR GOOD THIS TIME, DOG.
MISS HISS. A ROUND OF CRICKET.
:URK: N-NO, LIEGE! N-NOT A TRIFLE! POWER!
AN ARM! AN ENTIRE PNEUMATIC LIMB AND--
A STOVE FOR A CHEST! MANIMATRONIC, LORD! UNLICENSED AND--
STOVE FOR A CHEST AKA OF--
DANFORTH, THE MOST INDISPENSABLE HEAD IN LONDON. SPEAK CLEARLY. TELL TALES. PLEASE YOUR LORD...
AND I MAY EVEN APPOINT YOU HEAD DETECTIVE.


BEGGIN' PARDON, BUT FOR ME LIFE--
I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THIS BOOK.
PRIMARY READER
YOU PREFORMED WELL ALL THE SAME, WITH INDIVIDUAL LETTERS AND SUCH.
ENOUGH STUDY FOR TODAY. I SHOULD GO.
GO? BUT... NO.
I MUST. THESE VISITS-- I MUST.
CAN I COME WITH YOU?
NO. NOT NOW. IT WOULDN'T BE PROPER. BESIDES...
'MTRYIN' T'PILFER YER GOOD PARTS, WOT?
???
WAKE UP AN' GIVE US A WET ONE, EH, GUV?
THAT'S SIMPLY NOT GOING TO WORK, RANDY! YOU'VE ARMS NOT LONG ENOUGH T'SCRATCH YOUR OWN STUMP!
GIVE HER TO ME. I'LL SHOW YOU HOW A MAN DOES IT...
HNNNGH
"A MAN"? THAT'S WHY 'E HID UNDER A ROCADILE AS I RISKED LIFE AN' LIVER T'DRAG HIM STREETWAYS! BACK OFF, MOOCHER!

HID?!? I NEARLY LOST THIS GORGEOUS PLUMAGE OVER THAT BLOKE! YOU'RE THE RAT DROPPING WHO HOPPED OUT OF THE HOLE AN' LEFT YOUR PAL SKØM TO ROT!
DON'T YOU GUILT ME, YOU! I WARNED YE! IF YOU'D BOUGHT BETTER LEGS INSTEAD OF THAT STUPID WING--
I'M GONNA BUY A WHOLE NEW BODY WHEN YOU STOP ACTING LIKE A NINNY AND LET ME LIBERATE THAT PIECE OF MACHINERY FROM YONDER LUMP--
SO IT'S THE RUN AROUND, IS IT, "FRIEND?" FINE! YOU TAKE THAT ARM, AN' I'LL BITE OFF YER KNEECAPS!
!?!
EH... LOOK, RANDY... OUR LAD'S AWAKE!
SMACK ME IF'N HE ISN'T. SURE HE WAS DEAD--
FEELING RIGHT UP, SQUIRE? WELL, YOU CAN THANK YOUR MATES FOR TIGHTENING YOUR BOLTS AND WHO-WHATZES WHILE YOU TOOK A NAP!
TIGHTENED, NOT LOOSENED
MIND THE AXE, SKØM. MEBBE I CAN WRENCH HIM IN THE JEWELS--

NONSENSE, RANDY!
ANY MAN CAN SEE THAT OUR GUEST IS A MAN OF INTELLECT... ...TASTE, CLASS...
WE'VE ALL PROPER ENHANCEMENTS, HERE! BIRDS OF A FEATHER, SO TO SPEAK! YES?
FWONK
SKÖM!
OKAY, OKAY! I CAN SEE YOU'RE A MAN OF ACTION, BUT-- UH -- WE AIN'T NO PUSH-OVERS!
RANDY, I'M FINE. T'WAS AN ACCIDENT!
YOU MAKE TROUBLE, AN' YOU'LL GET TROUBLE DOUBLE, YOU WILL!
UH, SQUIRE? GUV'NOR? DON'T LISTEN TO RANDY! HE'S CAUGHT WITHE VAPORS MOST-- SIR?
RABBLECRAB! NOW LOOK WHAT YOU DONE!
SAVED YE FROM ANOTHER SMACK--
ALL THAT WORK TO SNEAK HIM IN CLANDESTINE STYLE, AND NOW HE'S GONNA HAVE HIS OWN PARADE DOWN MAIN STREET! DAMN, YOU'RE AN IDIOT!
IDIOT? WHO JUST GOT KNOCKED ON HIS ARSE?
THAT WAS A PLOY INTENDED TO LULL HIM INTO A SENSE OF SECURITY! MORON!

Ahem... 'EY ALL YOU LOT! UM... NOTHIN' TO WASTE YER PEEPINS ON HERE. JUST... UH --
JUST ME COUSIN, ALF, FROM KENT! UP FR WORK AN'...
THE RESISTANCE
YES 'E'S WITH THE RESISTANCE!
FOR US!
ARE YE DEAF? 'E'S ME COUSIN!
GONNA SAY 'E'S
RESISTANCE
HE'S THE ONE
OH MY GOD.
CRUNCH
WAIT! WE NEED YOU!
YER "COUSIN?" COULDN'T CON YOUR WAY OUT OF A WET SACK, COULD YOU?
I PANICKED. SORRY, JUST DON'T TELL...
=Ahem=
SIR... BOB.
I WANT TO KNOW TWO THINGS, AND TWO THINGS ONLY...
WHAT WAS THAT?
AND HOW CAN WE USE IT TO HELP US DESTROY ABSINTHE?

RESIST
STEEL
RESISTANCE
LEAD US
THE ONE.
'ELP US PLEASE.
STEEL?
HERE!
YOU HEARD ME PERFECTLY WELL.
THIS IS YOUR WORLD. MAKE OF IT WHAT YOU WILL.
CAN'T BE
ONE OF US
WEAPON
ONE C-CAN -KAFF- ALWAYS PULL ONE'S SELF UP -KAFF- TO A B-BETTER PLACE.
LIFE DOES NOT FOLLOW A PRE-DESTINED PATTERN. NO MAN... NOR WOMAN... IS BOUND TO THEIR STATION.
RESISTANCE
FOR US
STRANGE

FANCY THAT. MORE BUGGERS FROM BELOW.
HIS HIGHNESS SIMPLY MUST EMPLOY MEASURES TO CONTAIN THIS PESTILENCE, DON'T YOU THINK?
IT'S SO DIFFICULT TO DIGEST WHEN ONE FINDS AN UNDERDWELLER IN ONE'S LINE OF SIGHT.
BREEDING LIKE BOTBUGS DOWN THERE. NO MATTER. THE SWEEP WILL SHOOT HIM OFF.

POOR BASTARD. LOST AND CONFUSED. LAY ODDS HE'S ILL-- THE THINGS WHAT FESTER BELOW... :TSK:
AND WHO WOULD TEND THE STABLES? LUBRICATE OUR CARWORKS? UPON WHOM WOULD THE SPECULATIONS OF SCIENCE FIRST BE TESTED? YOU AND I? FEH!
OUGHT TO SET FIRE TO THE WHOLE DOWN THERE AN' BE DONE WITH IT.
SOCIETY CANNOT FUNCTION WITHOUT THE UNDERDWELLER, FRIEND. LONDON'S FLOWER CANNOT BLOOM WITHOUT DIRT.
BESIDES, ONE GLANCE REVEALS PROHIBITED MECHANICA. THE GUARD WILL BE ALONG TO COLLECT HIM MOMENTARILY...
LEST THE STREET-SWEEP ROUNDS FIRST!

LOOK AT YOU.
YES, YOU.

DON'T LISTEN TO THEM.
STAND AS A MAN OR CRAWL LIKE A DOG.

YOUR CHOICE. ALWAYS.

HUH-
GUH-
...HE'S NOT MOVING! WE'RE GOING TO GET A SHOW!
HEAVENS, I CAN'T BEAR TO WATCH! HAND ME YOUR TRIFOCALS, FELIX.
GET UP, POP.
CHRIST, GET UP! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?
!?!
HRONNNK
AIIIGH!
THUNK
THUNK

HELP! HELLP!
THE LESSON ENDS, WHEN YOU LOSE HEART. DESPAIR INDICATES A LACK OF CHARACTER...
BUT TO BELIEVE... THAT IS COURAGE.
STOP!
THERE ARE PEOPLE IN THE WAY! THERE ARE PEOPLE DOWN HERE!

WE'RE NOT TRASH! WE'RE NOT TRASH! PLEASE STOP. PLEASE.
HOLD ON, MATE.
DON'T LET THEM SEE YOU CRY.
BUMMP
DAFT BUGGER!
SMASH
YEAAGH!

ABE'S BEARD. WHAT'S HE DONE?
I-I'M SO SHORT OF BREATH-- I-- OVERCOME WITH-- Oh--
BRAVO! BRAVO!
THUNK
WRONNK
AIIGH!
HNNGH!!
WONK SMASH
POOM POOM POOM
BUURBLE
THUNKA HUNKA HUNK
NNNGH
SPURT
BY GOD, RIKK... IT'S HIM...
THAT'S THE CAT.
I STAND... AS A MAN.
I'M NOT A DOG... NOT SCUM... I AM A MAN!

I AM COLE BLAQUESMITH!
I AM COLE BLAQUESMITH AND I WILL NOT BE BROKEN! YOU WILL NOT TAKE MY LIFE FROM ME!
A MAN WHO DISSECTED A THREE KILOSTONE STEAM-APPARATUS WITH HIS BARE HANDS?
AND HE CALLED HIMSELF... COLE BLAQUESMITH?
SCHRAKKT
YES, LORD.
YOU'LL HAVE TO PARDON ME, VICTORIA. THE COURT IS NOT ACCUSTOMED TO-- WHAT'S THE WORD? OH, GIDDINESS--
BUT HOT DAMN. YOU JUST MADE MY CENTURY!
I'LL DO YOU ONE BETTER, GUV...
SET ME FREE, AND I'LL BRING YOU THAT STEEL ARM ON A SILVER PLATTER.
NEXT COLE VS VICTORIA QUEEN of SAVAGES!
IT'S EVOLUTION, BABY!

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I'M ROYALTY MYSELF, Y'KNOW... INHERITED THE THRONE FROM ME 'DEAR OL' DA.
I'M KING OF BUSHWAH.
BUSHWAH. Y'KNOW? SCATTERS? PROPPIN'S? DUNG?
USUALLY, PEOPLE LAUGH. TAKE IT YOU'RE NOT MUCH THE LAUGHER, YOU.
'ALF O'LONDON RAN ON THE STUFF WHEN I WAS A BOY. ONLY SO MUCH COAL AN SLICKSTUFF 'ROUND THE BOGGY PLACES--
AN' I PROMISE YE, DUNG DON'T STRAP ON KNICKERS AN' WALK ITSELF TO THE FURNACE!
PAP AN' I'D SPORT 'ROUND IN A GLORIOUS CARRIAGE WOT RAN ON OUR STOCK. THE PROPERS'D 'AVE A GOOD LAUGH WITH US, DAMES COURTSEYIN' AN' THE BRAIN-MEN TAPIN' THEIR TYMPS.
'ERE COMES THE KING OF BUSHWAH AN HIS HEIR! I USED TO SMILE SO WIDE, THEN. SO BIG. DULL CHILD, THOUGHT I WAS ONE OF THEM.
EVEN PAINTED ME SCAT-SHOVEL GOLD, LIKE A SCEPTRE. AN' I WAVED... HOW I WAVED.
PAP WAS A NOTHIN' OF A MAN. STIFF WIND SNAP HIM IN THRICE -- BUT TO ME, WIF THE SUN BEHIND HIM, LIKE A CROWN OF FIRE... HE DID LOOK LIKE A KING.
THEN, THE SUN'D FALL BEHIND A CLOUD, AN' I'D CATCH A LOOK AT HIS EYES...
THERE WAS NOTHIN' THERE. NOT ANGER. NOT PRIDE. NOT EVEN A REFLECTION. DARK BROWN POOLS.
DUNK DUNK
JUST LIKE SCATTERS.
SKÖM SAYS I JAMMER ON TOO MUCH. SUPPOSE THAT'S WHY E'S THE SMART ONE.
YOU AIN'T SAID BUT TWO WORDS TOGETHER. GUESS THAT MAKES YOU A BLOODY GENIUS.
TAKE A LOOK, MATE.

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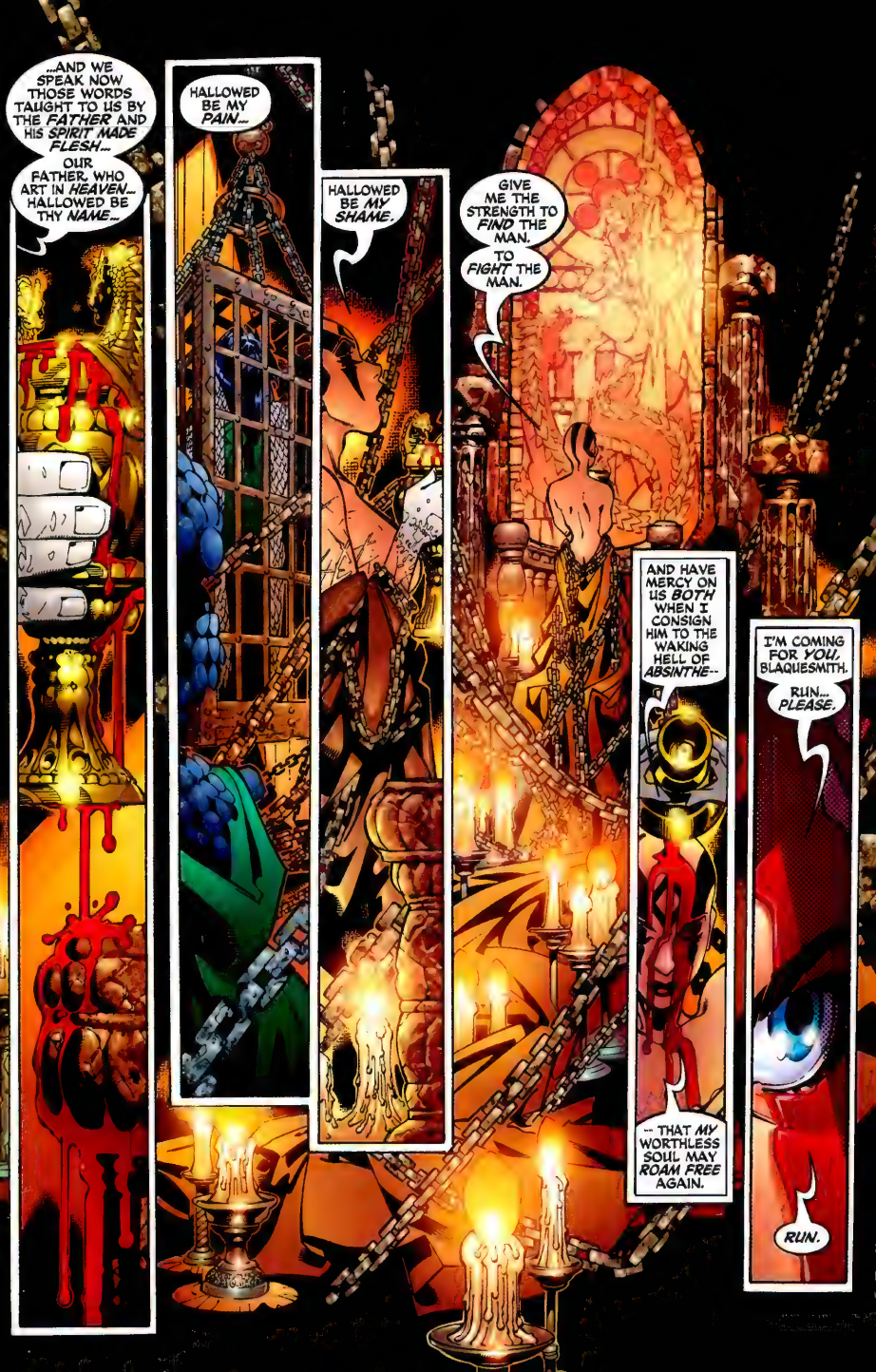
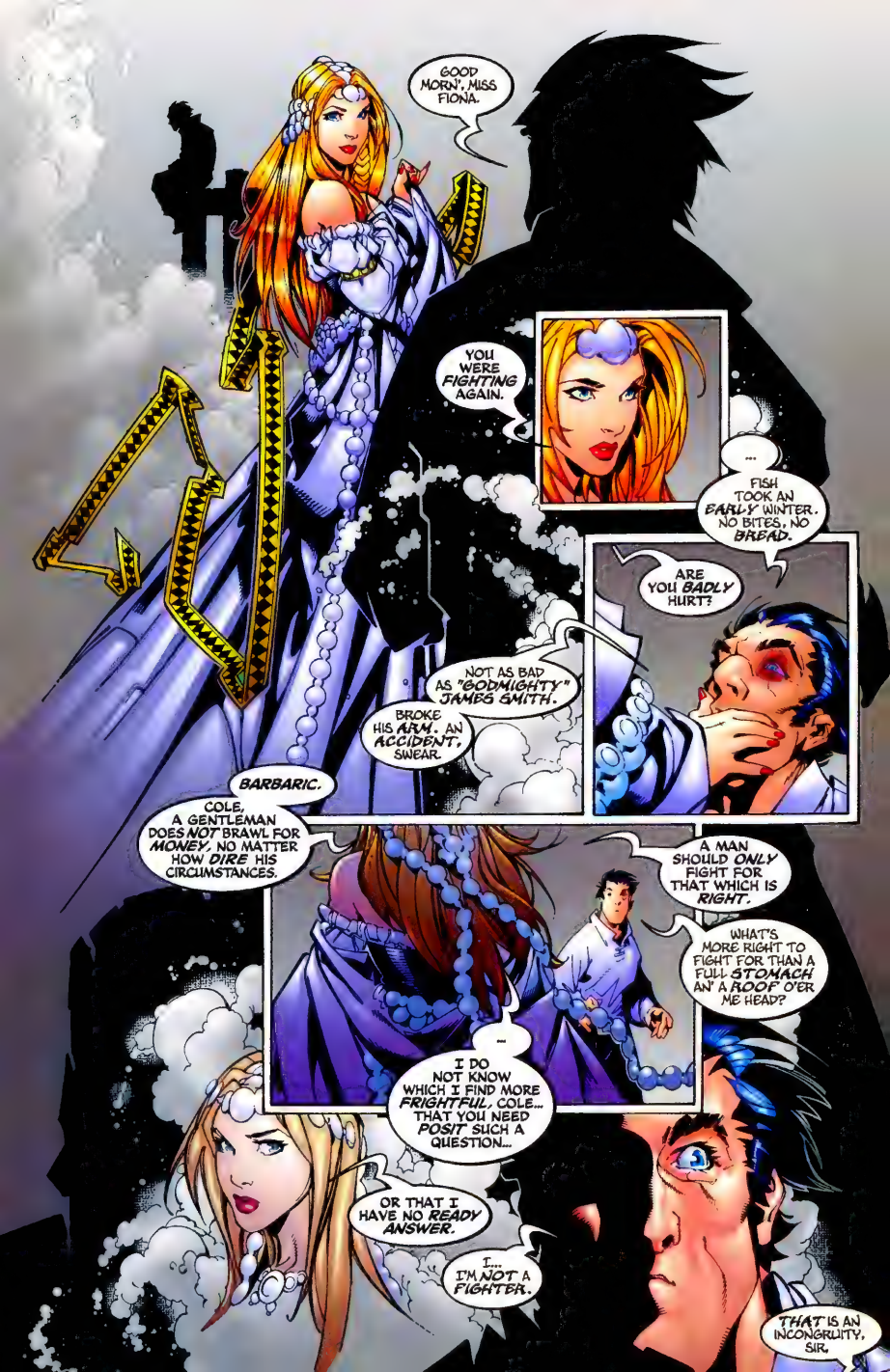
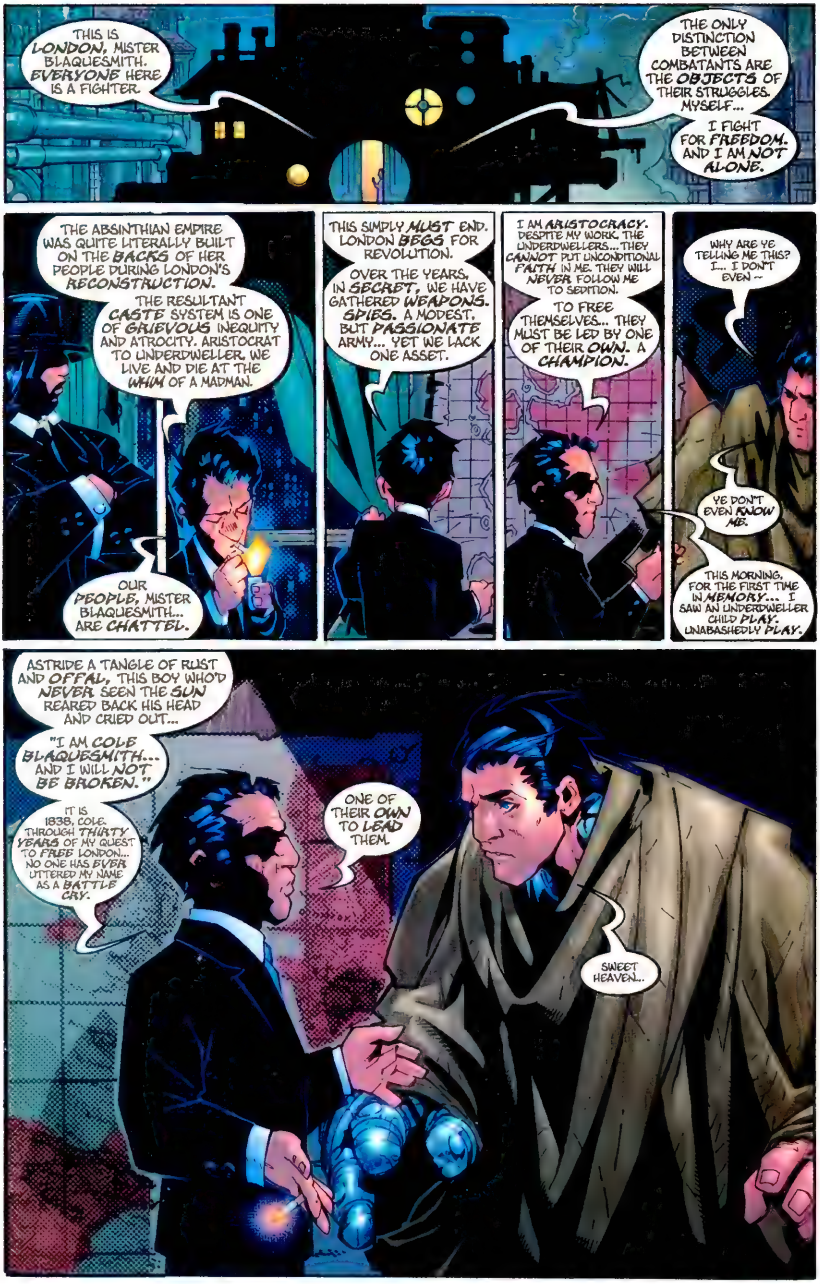
100 DRAGONS
THIS... THIS IS ALL REAL, ISN'T IT? I'M NOT DREAMING THIS.
NO, MATE. NO YOU'RE NOT. THIS IS AS REAL AS SHE GETS.
Created by BACHALO & KELLY
Drawn & Written by Chris BACHALO & Joe KELLY
Inks by Richard FRIEND
Colors by BAD@SS!
Lettered by Richard STARKINGS of COMICRAFT
Assisted by John LAYMAN
Edited by Scott DUNBIER
Cole Blaquesmith awakens from a deep slumber to find London defiled by the warped scientific labors of her liege, Lord Absinthe. Even Cole's own body has betrayed him, and he is now a hideous amalgam of man and machine. Disoriented, hallucinating, and alone, Cole contemplates [illegible] pain long enough to [illegible] two children from [illegible] mechanical monstrosity.

RANDY? HAVE YE SOMETHING I MIGHT WEAR?
I WOULD LOOK NO MORE ON THIS... MY--
AH-HA! 'AT'S WHY YE CAME BACK LIKE THE CAT, YES? EVERBODY IN LONDON KNOWS RANDY AN' SKÖM ARE MEN WITH MEANS!
I KNEW NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.
'AT WORKS TOO, GUV.
NOW LESEE? GOT TA BE SOMETHIN' OUTTA THE GRAVES WHAT'LL FIT YER FRAME. AH!
HOW DID I -- HOW DID IT ALL CHANGE LIKE THIS?
RUSTLE TANKA CHAK
BIG BLOKE, 'ALF HORSE DIED FROM SWAYBACK LAST WEEK. OUGHTA FIT--
MISTER BLAQUESMITH, I PRESUME?
AW. PITCH ME.
MY NAME IS PEEL. SIR ROBERT PEEL.
I BELIEVE IT'S HIGH TIME WE DIVINED EXACTLY HOW YOU'RE GOING TO HELP OVERTHROW OUR LUBRICOUS AND FETID MONARCHY.


...AND WE SPEAK NOW THOSE WORDS TAUGHT TO US BY THE FATHER AND HIS SPIRIT MADE FLESH...
OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN... HALLOWED BE THY NAME...
HALLOWED BE MY PAIN...
HALLOWED BE MY SHAME.
GIVE ME THE STRENGTH TO FIND THE MAN.
TO FIGHT THE MAN.
AND HAVE MERCY ON US BOTH WHEN I CONSIGN HIM TO THE WAKING HELL OF ABSINTHE--
-- THAT MY WORTHLESS SOUL MAY ROAM FREE AGAIN.
I'M COMING FOR YOU, BLAQUESMITH.
RUN... PLEASE.
RUN.

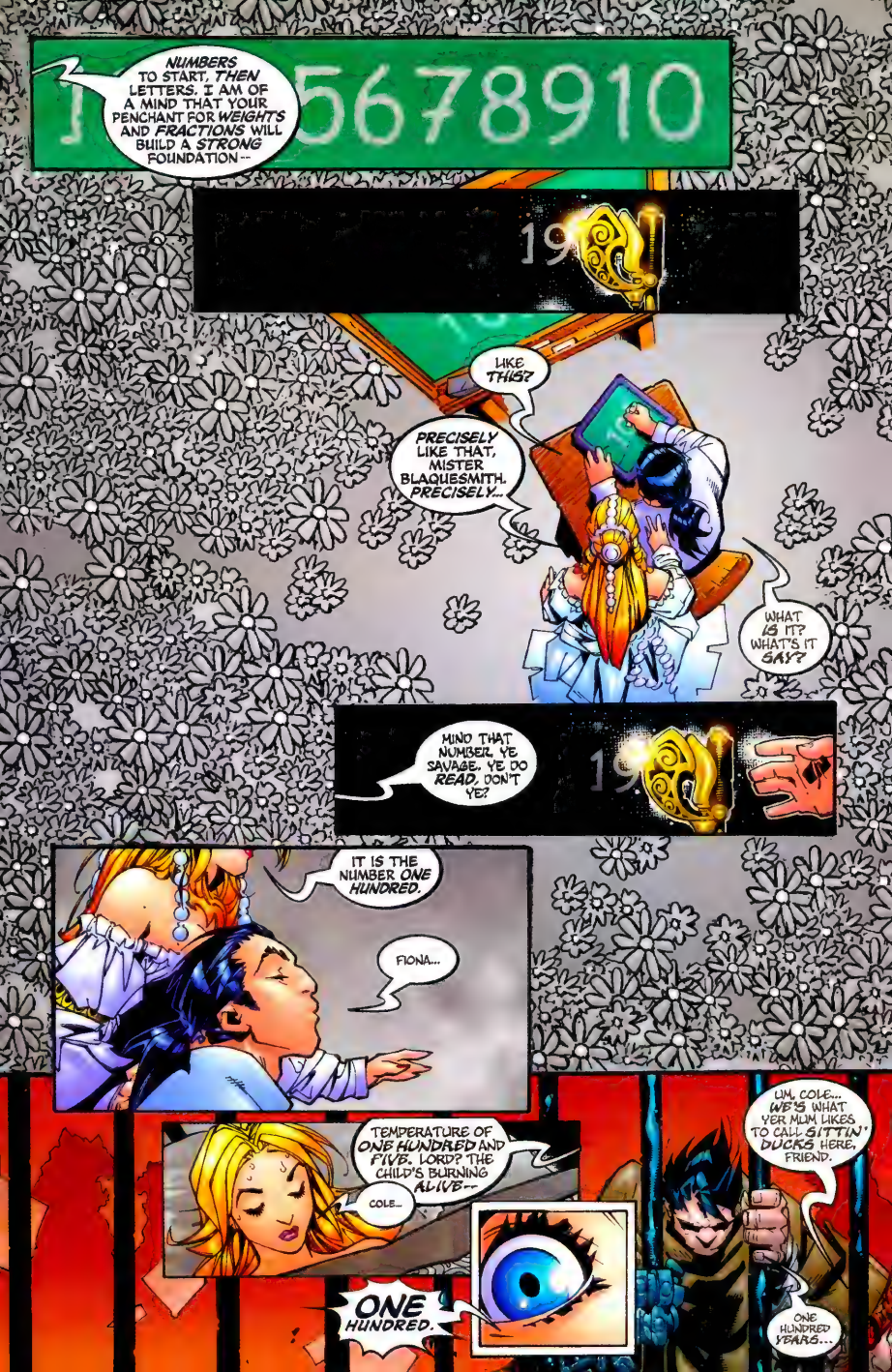

GOOD MORN', MISS FIONA.
YOU WERE FIGHTING AGAIN.
...
FISH TOOK AN EARLY WINTER. NO BITES, NO BREAD.
ARE YOU BADLY HURT?
NOT AS BAD AS "GODMIGHTY" JAMES SMITH.
BROKE HIS ARM, AN ACCIDENT, SWEAR.
BARBARIC.
COLE, A GENTLEMAN DOES NOT BRAWL FOR MONEY, NO MATTER HOW DIRE HIS CIRCUMSTANCES.
A MAN SHOULD ONLY FIGHT FOR THAT WHICH IS RIGHT.
WHAT'S MORE RIGHT TO FIGHT FOR THAN A FULL STOMACH AN' A ROOF O'ER ME HEAD?
...
I DO NOT KNOW WHICH I FIND MORE FRIGHTFUL, COLE... THAT YOU NEED POSIT SUCH A QUESTION...
OR THAT I HAVE NO READY ANSWER.
I... I'M NOT A FIGHTER.
THAT IS AN INCONGRUITY, SIR.

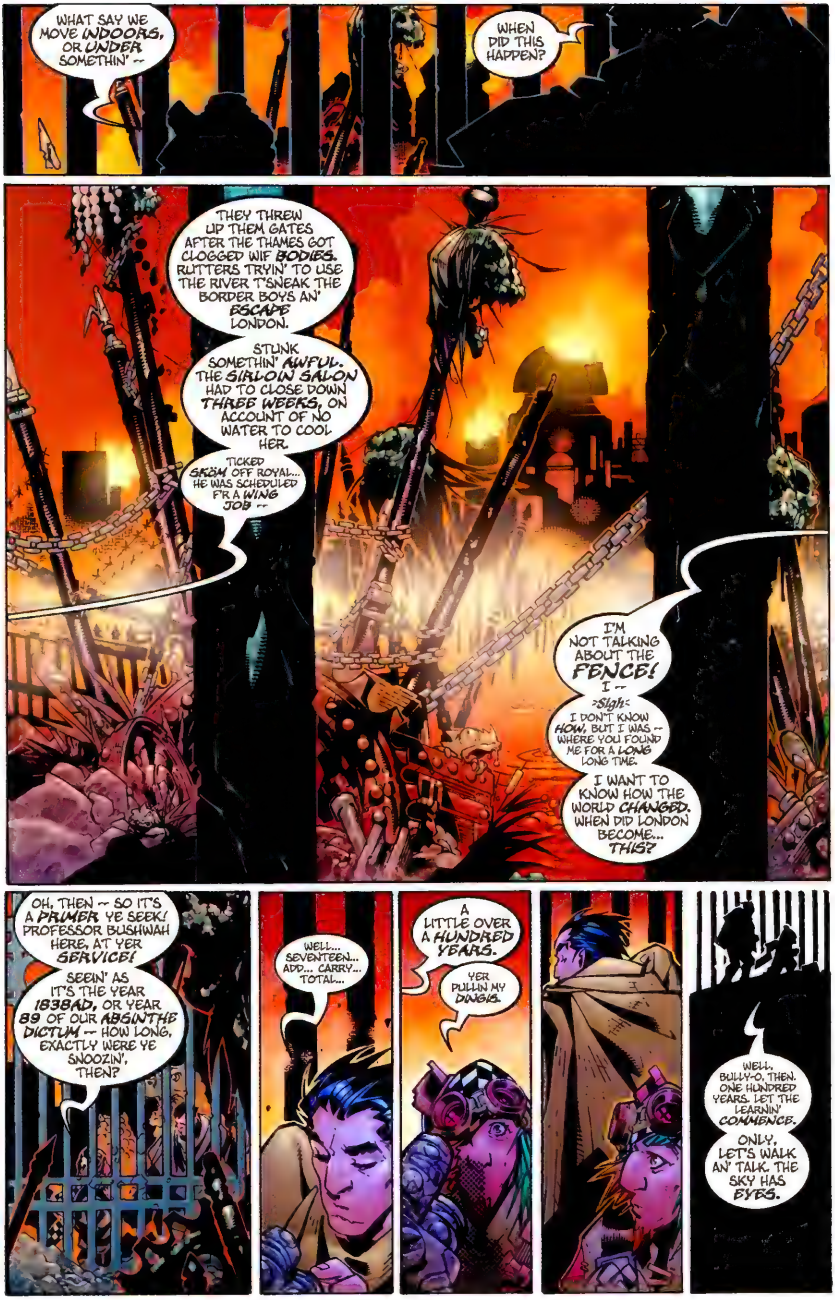

THIS IS LONDON, MISTER BLAQUESMITH. EVERYONE HERE IS A FIGHTER.
THE ONLY DISTINCTION BETWEEN COMBATANTS ARE THE OBJECTS OF THEIR STRUGGLES. MYSELF...
I FIGHT FOR FREEDOM. AND I AM NOT ALONE.
THE ABSINTHIAN EMPIRE WAS QUITE LITERALLY BUILT ON THE BACKS OF HER PEOPLE DURING LONDON'S RECONSTRUCTION.
THE RESULTANT CASTE SYSTEM IS ONE OF GRIEVOUS INEQUITY AND ATROCITY. ARISTOCRAT TO UNDERDWELLER, WE LIVE AND DIE AT THE WHIM OF A MADMAN.
OUR PEOPLE, MISTER BLAQUESMITH... ARE CHATTEL.
THIS SIMPLY MUST END. LONDON BEGS FOR REVOLUTION.
OVER THE YEARS, IN SECRET, WE HAVE GATHERED WEAPONS. SPIES. A MODEST, BUT PASSIONATE ARMY... YET WE LACK ONE ASSET.
I AM ARISTOCRACY. DESPITE MY WORK, THE UNDERDWELLERS... THEY CANNOT PUT UNCONDITIONAL FAITH IN ME. THEY WILL NEVER FOLLOW ME TO SEDITION.
TO FREE THEMSELVES... THEY MUST BE LED BY ONE OF THEIR OWN. A CHAMPION.
WHY ARE YE TELLING ME THIS? I... I DON'T EVEN ~
YE DON'T EVEN KNOW ME.
THIS MORNING, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MEMORY... I SAW AN UNDERDWELLER CHILD PLAY. UNABASHEDLY PLAY.
ASTRIDE A TANGLE OF RUST AND OFFAL, THIS BOY WHO'D NEVER SEEN THE SUN REARED BACK HIS HEAD AND CRIED OUT...
"I AM COLE BLAQUESMITH... AND I WILL NOT BE BROKEN."
IT IS 1838, COLE. THROUGH THIRTY YEARS OF MY QUEST TO FREE LONDON... NO ONE HAS EVER UTTERED MY NAME AS A BATTLE CRY.
ONE OF THEIR OWN TO LEAD THEM.
SWEET HEAVEN...

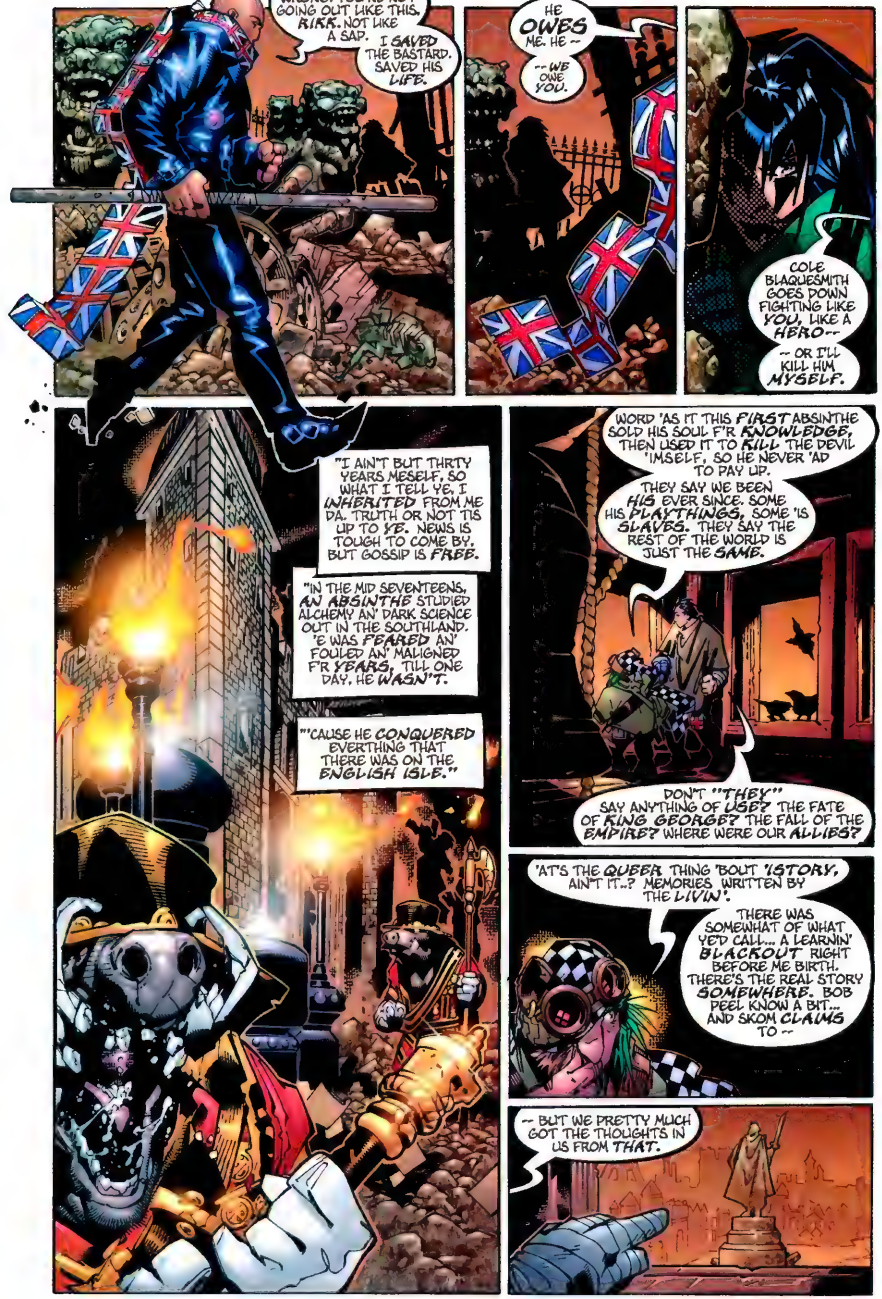
I KNOW THIS IS ABRUPT; BUT WITH YOUR "GIFT"--
--TIME IS SHORT. WE MUST STRIKE BEFORE THEY COME FOR YOU--
EIGHTEEN... EIGHTEEN THIRTY--
EIGHTEEN...
I HAVE TO LEAVE.
WHAT?!? NO! HAVE YOU NOT HEARD A WORD--
STOVEPIPE!
SIR BOB SAYS STAY. YOU STAY.
PLEASE. I HAVE TO-- I NEED AIR--
STAY.
HOULFF
I SHOULD IMAGINE THAT MEETING WENT SMASHINGLY.
NO.
MISTER BLAQUESMITH? GUV? SHOULDN'T WE GO AFTER 'IM, SKOM?
'AN GET PICKED UP FOR AIDING AND ABBETTING THAT UNLICENSED ARM? NO THANK YOU.
Kaff Koff
HE WON'T HELP... WON'T...
SHOULDVE LEFT HIM BURIED.
GUV? EY, GUV!
"A MESS OR A MIRACLE, VILE PET?"

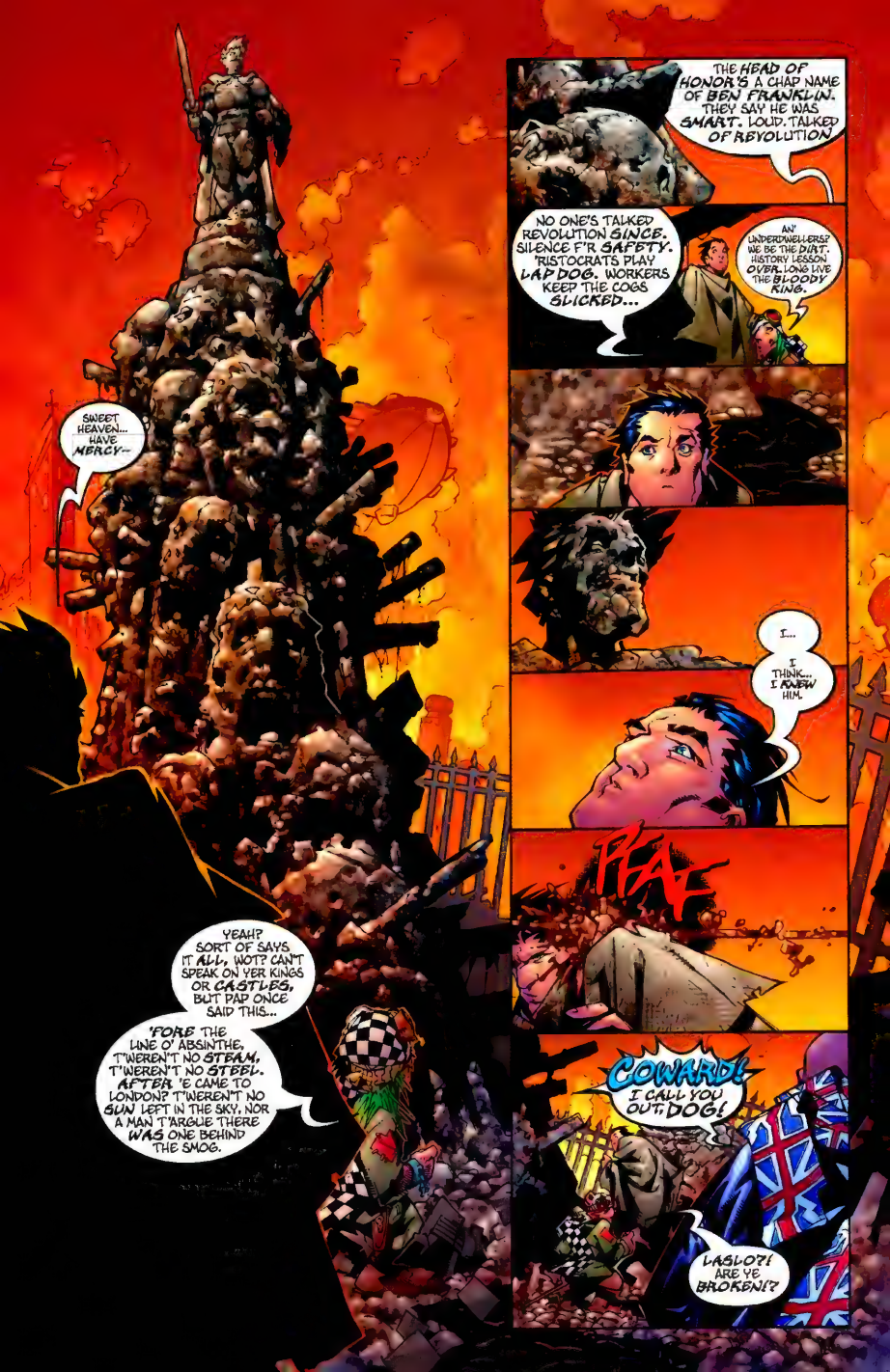
FAIRY TALE OR FAIRLY TRUE..?
ONLY THE SHADOW KNOWS.
HRRN?
JUST AN EXPRESSION, BATCAT. JUST AN EXPRESSION. SHADOWS KNOW NOTHING BUT HOW TO BLOCK THE LIGHT OF TRUTH.
"COLE BLAQUESMITH" IS NOT THE SORT OF NAME ONE SIMPLY INVENTS. LEST ONE IS CONSTRUCTING PENNY FICTION. RIGHT NOW, HE IS MYTH. VAPOR...
BUT IF HE IS THE HE LI'L VICTORIA CLAIMS HE BE — OH, HOW QUICKLY THIS MUDPACK CALLED EARTH WILL FALL TO ME!
THE KEY TO THE WORLD WILL BE MINE, SEIZED FROM HER WOMB WITHOUT THE ASSISTANCE OF THOSE POMPOUS VATICAN MOPPETS—
-AHEM:- YOUR GUEST HAS ARRIVED, HIGHNESS...
FROM THE HOLY CITY.
WELL... THAT SHOULD TEACH ME NOT TO RHAPSODIZE TO THE CAT, SHOULDN'T IT?
NO OFFENSE, YOUR HOLINESS.

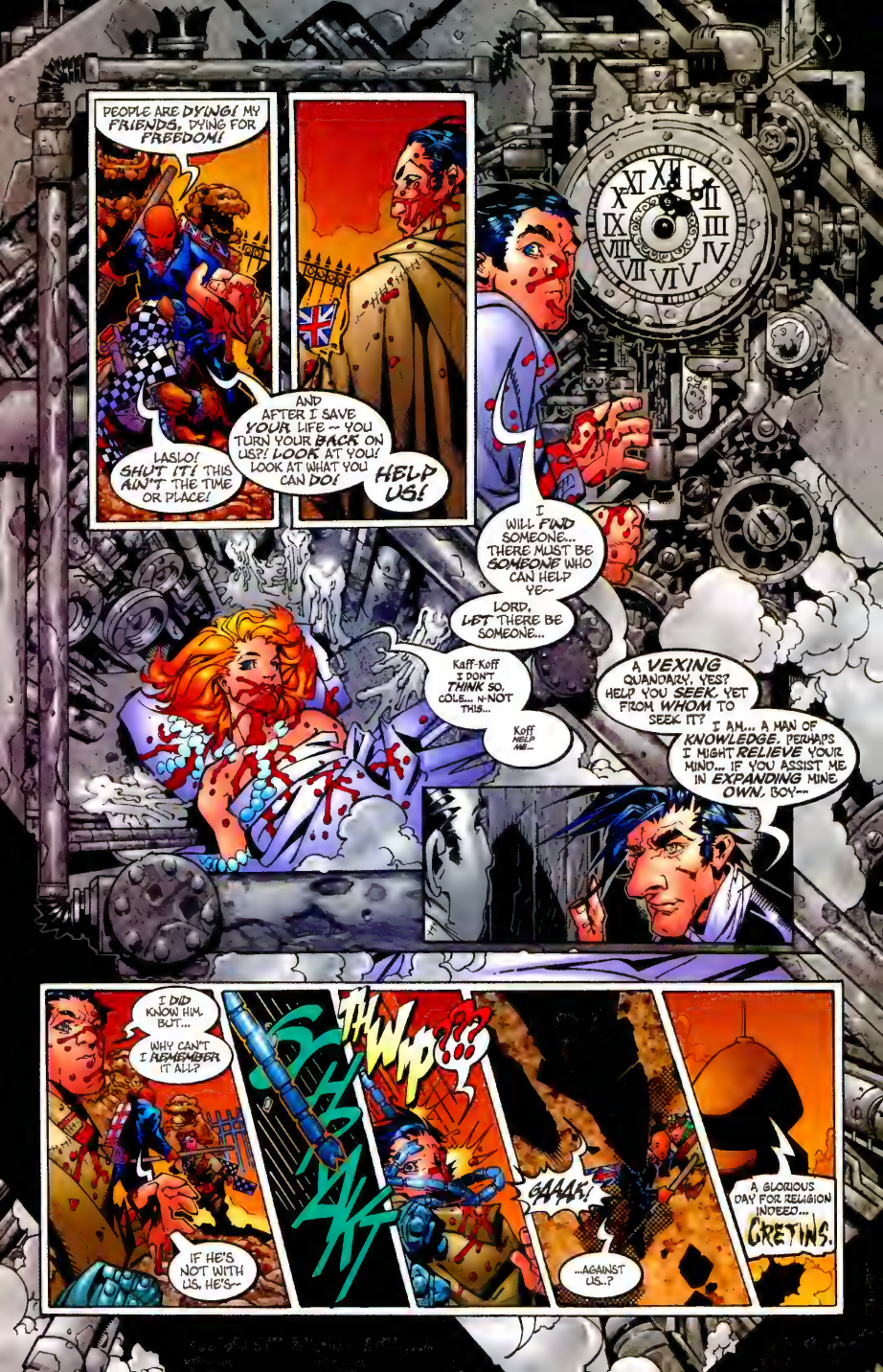
OFFENSE TAKEN... YOUR HIGHNESS...
BUT IN LIGHT OF THE "HOSPITALITY" YOUR MAN NIXON HAS AVAILED ME THROUGH MADEMOISELLES STRAAP AND HER SISTERS... TEMPORARILY FORGOTTEN.
IN THE AFTER-ALL, HE IS ASSURED A PLACE AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE IRON MONK.
THANK YOU, HOLINESS. I LIVE TO SERVE.
LIEGE. OUR VISITOR IS ANXIOUS TO DISCUSS YOUR MUTUAL ENDEAVOR.
HE IS A MAN OF KEEN INTEREST IN THINGS SCIENTIFIC.
OF COURSE HE IS. GOD IS THE ULTIMATE SCIENTIST.
HE'S JUST NOT AS GOOD AT DESIGN AS I AM.
BLASPHEMY AND SARCASM ARE THE TOOLS OF SATAN.
BELIEVE I CAN, HOLY MAN. MEDIK? THE SHEET.
SATAN AND I WERE ROOMMATES AT UNIVERSITY. YOU HAVE THE I SEEK?
FULFILL YOUR PLEDGE, AND THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE IS YOURS TO PICK FROM.
MMMGGLF
THE DISSECTION IS A MATTER OF FOR OUR MAN FAUST. I'LL RELAY THAT YOU WERE
THE UNDERDWELLERS ARE ALWAYS AT THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH. JUST DON'T ASK OUR RICK TO OR SIGN THE
BUT IF YOU WANT TO SEE SOMETHING TO KNOCK YOUR FROCK OFF —
THIS WILL BLOW YOUR MIND, CAT.


NUMBERS TO START, THEN LETTERS. I AM OF A MIND THAT YOUR PENCHANT FOR WEIGHTS AND FRACTIONS WILL BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION--
5678910
LIKE THIS?
PRECISELY LIKE THAT, MISTER BLAQUESMITH. PRECISELY...
WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S IT SAY?
MIND THAT NUMBER, YE SAVAGE. YE DO READ, DON'T YE?
IT IS THE NUMBER ONE HUNDRED.
FIONA...
TEMPERATURE OF ONE HUNDRED AND FIVE. LORD? THE CHILD'S BURNING ALIVE--
COLE...
ONE HUNDRED.
UM, COLE... WE'S WHAT YER MUM LIKES TO CALL SITTIN' DUCKS HERE, FRIEND.
ONE HUNDRED YEARS...


WHAT SAY WE MOVE INDOORS, OR UNDER SOMETHIN' --
WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN?
THEY THREW UP THEM GATES AFTER THE THAMES GOT CLOGGED WIF BODIES. RUTTERS TRYIN' TO USE THE RIVER T'SNEAK THE BORDER BOYS AN' ESCAPE LONDON.
STUNK SOMETHIN' AWFUL. THE SIALOW SALON HAD TO CLOSE DOWN THREE WEEKS, ON ACCOUNT OF NO WATER TO COOL HER.
TICKED SKRIM OFF ROYAL... HE WAS SCHEDULED FR A WING JOB --
I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT THE FENCE! I --
:Sigh: I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT I WAS -- WHERE YOU FOUND ME FOR A LONG LONG TIME.
I WANT TO KNOW HOW THE WORLD CHANGED. WHEN DID LONDON BECOME... THIS?
OH. THEN -- SO IT'S A PRIMER YE SEEK! PROFESSOR BUSHWAH HERE, AT YER SERVICE!
SEEIN' AS IT'S THE YEAR 1838AD, OR YEAR 89 OF OUR ABSINTHE DICTUM -- HOW LONG, EXACTLY WERE YE SNOOZIN', THEN?
WELL... SEVENTEEN... ADD... CARRY... TOTAL...
A LITTLE OVER A HUNDRED YEARS.
YER PULLIN MY DINGIS.
WELL, BULLY-O. THEN, ONE HUNDRED YEARS. LET THE LEARNIN' COMMENCE.
ONLY, LET'S WALK AN' TALK. THE SKY HAS EYES.

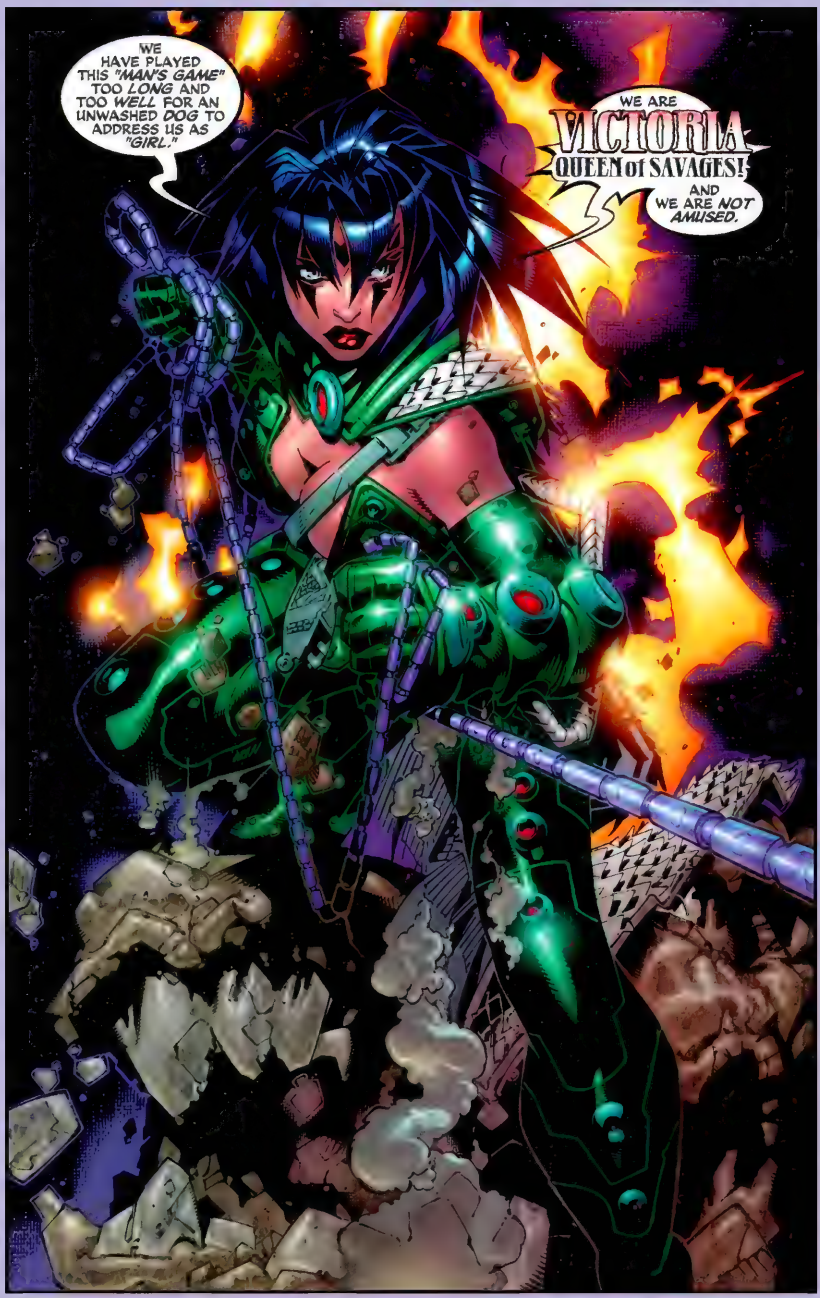

...THIS IS WRONG... FLAT WRONG. YOU'RE NOT GOING OUT LIKE THIS, KIRK. NOT LIKE A SAP.
I SAVED THE BASTARD. SAVED HIS LIFE.
HE OWES ME. HE --
-- WE OWE YOU.
COLE BLAQUESMITH GOES DOWN FIGHTING LIKE YOU, LIKE A HERO--
-- OR I'LL KILL HIM MYSELF.
"I AIN'T BUT THRTY YEARS MESELF, SO WHAT I TELL YE, I INHERITED FROM ME DA. TRUTH OR NOT TIS UP TO YE. NEWS IS TOUGH TO COME BY, BUT GOSSIP IS FREE.
"IN THE MID SEVENTEENS, AN ABSINTHE STUDIED ALCHEMY AN' DARK SCIENCE OUT IN THE SOUTHLAND. 'E WAS FEARED AN' FOULED AN' MALIGNED F'R YEARS, TILL ONE DAY, HE WASN'T.
"'CAUSE HE CONQUERED EVERTHING THAT THERE WAS ON THE ENGLISH ISLE."
WORD 'AS IT THIS FIRST ABSINTHE SOLD HIS SOUL F'R KNOWLEDGE, THEN USED IT TO KILL THE DEVIL 'IMSELF, SO HE NEVER 'AD TO PAY UP.
THEY SAY WE BEEN HIS EVER SINCE. SOME HIS PLAYTHINGS, SOME 'IS SLAVES. THEY SAY THE REST OF THE WORLD IS JUST THE SAME.
DON'T "THEY" SAY ANYTHING OF LISE? THE FATE OF KING GEORGE? THE FALL OF THE EMPIRE? WHERE WERE OUR ALLIES?
'AT'S THE QUEER THING 'BOUT 'ISTORY, AIN'T IT..? MEMORIES WRITTEN BY THE LIVIN'.
THERE WAS SOMEWHAT OF WHAT YE'D CALL... A LEARNIN' BLACKOUT RIGHT BEFORE ME BIRTH. THERE'S THE REAL STORY SOMEWHERE. BOB PEEL KNOW A BIT... AND SKOM CLAIMS TO --
-- BUT WE PRETTY MUCH GOT THE THOUGHTS IN US FROM THAT.


SWEET HEAVEN... HAVE MERCY--
'FORE THE LINE O' ABSINTHE, T'WEREN'T NO STEAM, T'WEREN'T NO STEEL. AFTER 'E CAME TO LONDON? T'WEREN'T NO SUN LEFT IN THE SKY, NOR A MAN T'ARGUE THERE WAS ONE BEHIND THE SMOG.
YEAH? SORT OF SAYS IT ALL, WOT? CAN'T SPEAK ON YER KINGS OR CASTLES, BUT PAP ONCE SAID THIS...
THE HEAD OF HONOR'S A CHAP NAME OF BEN FRANKLIN. THEY SAY HE WAS SMART. LOUD. TALKED OF REVOLUTION
NO ONE'S TALKED REVOLUTION SINCE. SILENCE F'R SAFETY. 'RISTOCRATS PLAY LAP DOG. WORKERS KEEP THE COGS SLICKED...
AN' UNDERDWELLERS? WE BE THE DIRT. HISTORY LESSON OUTTA LONG LIVE THE BLOODY KING.
I... I THINK... I KNEW HIM.
PFAF
COWARD! I CALL YOU OUT, DOG!
LASLO?! ARE YE BROKEN!?


PEOPLE ARE DYING! MY FRIENDS, DYING FOR FREEDOM!
LASLO! SHUT IT! THIS AIN'T THE TIME OR PLACE!
AND AFTER I SAVE YOUR LIFE -- YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON US?! LOOK AT YOU! LOOK AT WHAT YOU CAN DO!
HELP US!
I WILL FIND SOMEONE... THERE MUST BE SOMEONE WHO CAN HELP YE--
LORD, LET THERE BE SOMEONE...
Kaff-Koff I DON'T THINK SO, COLE... N-NOT THIS...
Koff HELP ME...
A VEXING QUANDARY, YES? HELP YOU SEEK, YET FROM WHOM TO SEEK IT? I AM... A MAN OF KNOWLEDGE. PERHAPS I MIGHT RELIEVE YOUR MIND... IF YOU ASSIST ME IN EXPANDING MINE OWN, BOY...
I DID KNOW HIM, BUT... WHY CAN'T I REMEMBER IT ALL?
IF HE'S NOT WITH US, HE'S--
SHANK
THWIP!!!
GAAAK!
...AGAINST US..?
A GLORIOUS DAY FOR RELIGION INDEED... CRETINS.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WORD FROM THE TOWER COURTYARD? SHE'S MADE CONTACT.
ALL BROWN UP, OUR VICKI? PITY IT'S ONLY TO BE SLAPPED DOWN.
SUMMON FAUST.
LONDON IS NAKED. FOG AND SOOT DO NOT CLOTHE HER, NOR DO THE LACE TRAPPINGS OF THE ARISTOCRACY ABOVE. THOSE PRETTY CLOWNS AT MY MASTER'S WHIM.
BENEATH WRAPPED FEET, I SEE HER INNARDS SPLAYED OUT IN SACRIFICE. DRIPPING IN OIL AND SWEAT AND THE DARK I SPREAD WITH MY VERY BREATH--
AND IT IS GOOD. IT IS MY MASTER'S HEARTWORKS AND IT IS GOOD.
ORDER AMONG CHAOS. IMPROVEMENT ON A THEME. LONDON, WHETHER IT BE HER SPIRES OR HER SUBJECTS TRANSFORMED FOR HIM. ALWAYS FOR HIM? AND HE IS ALWAYS RIGHT.
GLORY COMES FROM TOUCH OF THE DIVINE UPON NAKED SOULS OF BEASTS LIKE WE.
I AM TOUCHED BY THE DIVINE --I AM HIS GLORY... AND WHEN MY MASTER CALLS ME UP FROM BELOW...
LONDON AND I BOTH SHIVER... NAKED.
MREWR!
I HEARD HIM, BATCAT. I HEARD HIM BEFORE HE SPOKE. LAST SENTENCE... WE GO.

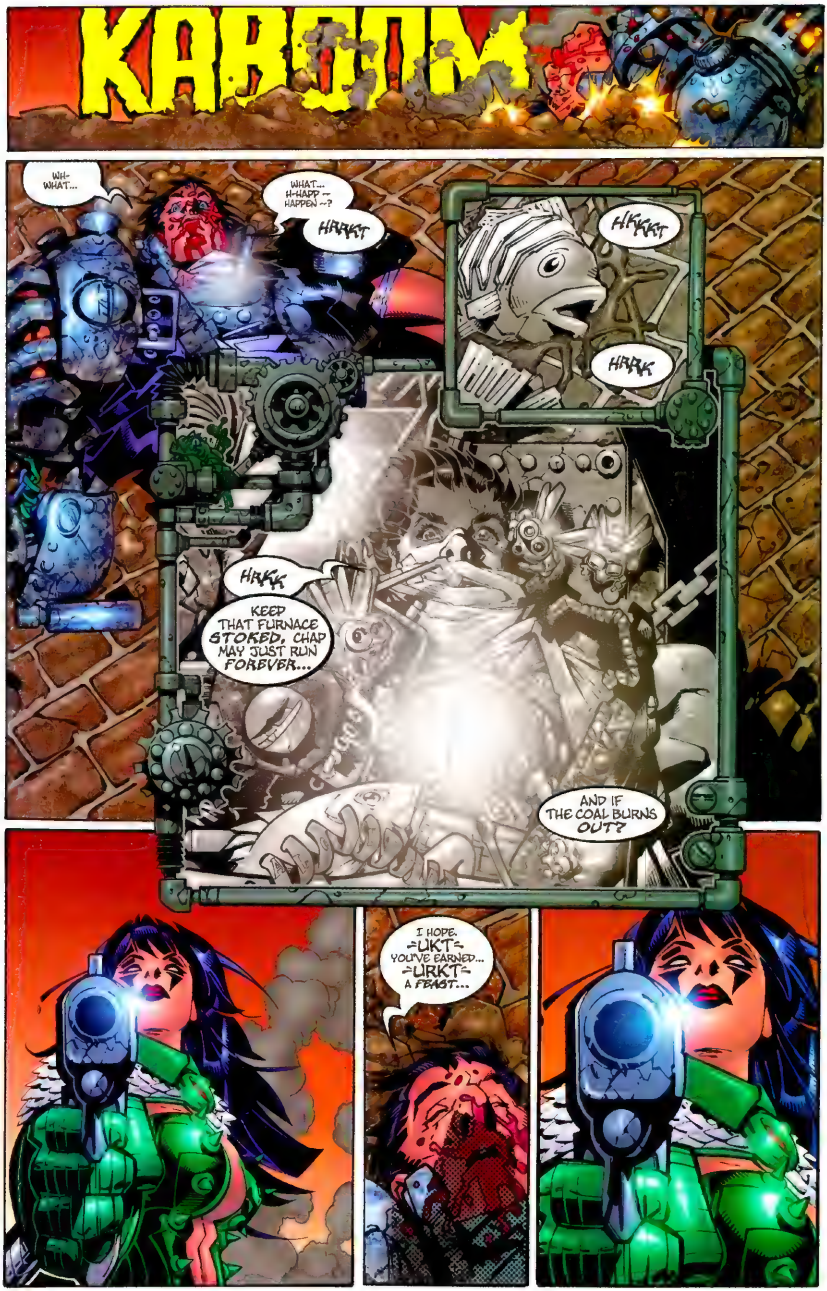
WAS THIS YER MIND, BOY..? GET THE MAN STRUNG UP ON A HOOK?!
GAACH!
YE WHO BE CALLED COLE BLAQUESMITH!
BY ORDER OF THE MIGHTY LORD ABSINTHE, YE HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS OPEN PREY TO AGENTS OF THE STATE!
FOR... FOR BEING A COWARD...
HE DESERVES WHATEVER HE GETS...
WE STAKE FIRST CLAIM TO YOUR BOUNTY! LAY DOWN NOW, AND YOU WILL NOT SUFFER. RESIST AND YOU WILL.
ALRIGHT THEN, FISHY. LET'S HAVE US A SLEEP IN. ALREADY HAVEN'T GOT ALL MONTH.
URK
...
PEST
?
CHAK
MOTHERLESS CUR...
CRUNCH
WELL... THAT'S SOMETHING. NO NEED FOR LUNGS WHEN YE'VE GOT A BELLOWS. EH?
THIS IS A MAN'S GAME YOU'VE CHOSEN, GIRL. WALK AWAY, LEST YOU'RE PREPARED TO SEE IT THROUGH!

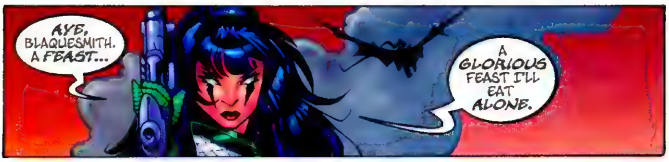

WE HAVE PLAYED THIS "MAN'S GAME" TOO LONG AND TOO WELL FOR AN UNWASHED DOG TO ADDRESS US AS "GIRL."
WE ARE VICTORIA QUEEN of SAVAGES!
AND WE ARE NOT AMUSED.

NOT GOOD, THIS. TOO MANY EYBS. SOLDIERS'LL BE HERE ANY SECOND --
LOOK AT HIM, RANDY! FIGHT! FIGHT!
WHAT HAVE I DONE TO BE HUNTED, VICTORIA? WHAT?!
YOU STOOD. YOU SCREAMED -- AND MY MASTER HEARD YOU.
FAAASH
WOOSH
I STOOD --?!
GAH!
METHINKS I KNOW YOU TOO, LASS!
SNAP
WRRR ZP
DID YOU ONLY HELP ME STAND YESTERDAY--
--TO KNOCK ME DOWN TODAY?
TCHAKA CHUNK
YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT US, WRETCH. NOTHING.
BO
MF

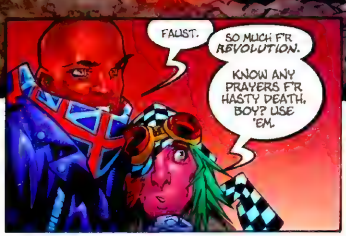
CRASH
YESTERDAY, WAS OUR DAY OFF.
TODAY...
SLAKT
TODAY, WE WOULD EAT.
THUMPA
IF I ONLY 'AD ME MUSKET, I'D LAY HER SUCH A FLOGGIN'--
RABID RANDY.
WHOSIE WHATZABE JBZUI?!
ABSINTHE KNOWS WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE. YOU MUST LEAVE IMMEDIATELY TO LIVE.
LEAVE?
YES. TAKE THIS TO PEEL. IT CONTAINS INFORMATION HE MUST READ.
THE LIFE OF EVERY UNDERDWELLER DEPENDS ON IT.
B-BUT-- ME MATE THERE-- HE--
HE'S DEAD.
BIT OF A PESSIMIST, AIN'T WE? VICKI'S NOT THAT GOOD --
BUT FAUST IS.
GO. TELL PEEL. LIVE.
WHO WAS THAT CAT?
JUST WATCH YER BRAWL, LASLO. IT'S ALMOST OVER.

THUD
LET'S HAVE AT IT, MI'LADY -- BARE KNUCKLED AN' BRUTISH--
BECAUSE I WILL NOT BE SOMEONE'S DINNER WITHOUT A FIGHT!
HEH... FIGHTING FOR A FULL STOMACH AN' A ROOF O'ER YOUR HEAD. HEH. ALRIGHT THEN?
FORGIVE ME, FIONA... A PROMISE IS A PROMISE...
BUT THE WORLD HAS MOVED ON AN' LEFT OUR PROMISES BEHIND.
CHNK TCHAKA CHAT
THAT'S RIGHT... SHOW THE QUEEN WHY OL' ABE HAS IT IN FOR YE.
AKKK!
!?!
POFF
!


KABOOM
WH-WHAT...
WHAT... H-HAPP-- HAPPEN--?
HRRKT
HRKKT
HRRK
HRKK
KEEP THAT FURNACE STOKED, CHAP MAY JUST RUN FOREVER...
AND IF THE COAL BURNS OUT?
I HOPE, =URKT=, YOU'VE EARNED... =URKT= A FEAST...



ALONE... BUT FREE. FREE.
VICTORIA OF KENT. STAND DOWN.
THE MANIMATRONIC IS NO LONGER YOUR CONCERN.
YOU?!
I.
YOUR MASTER HAS HAD A CHANGE OF FAVOUR. VICTORY IS YOURS...
BUT THE BOUNTY IS MINE. STANDDOWN.



NEXT

FAUST

THE DEVIL DOES HAVE A FACE

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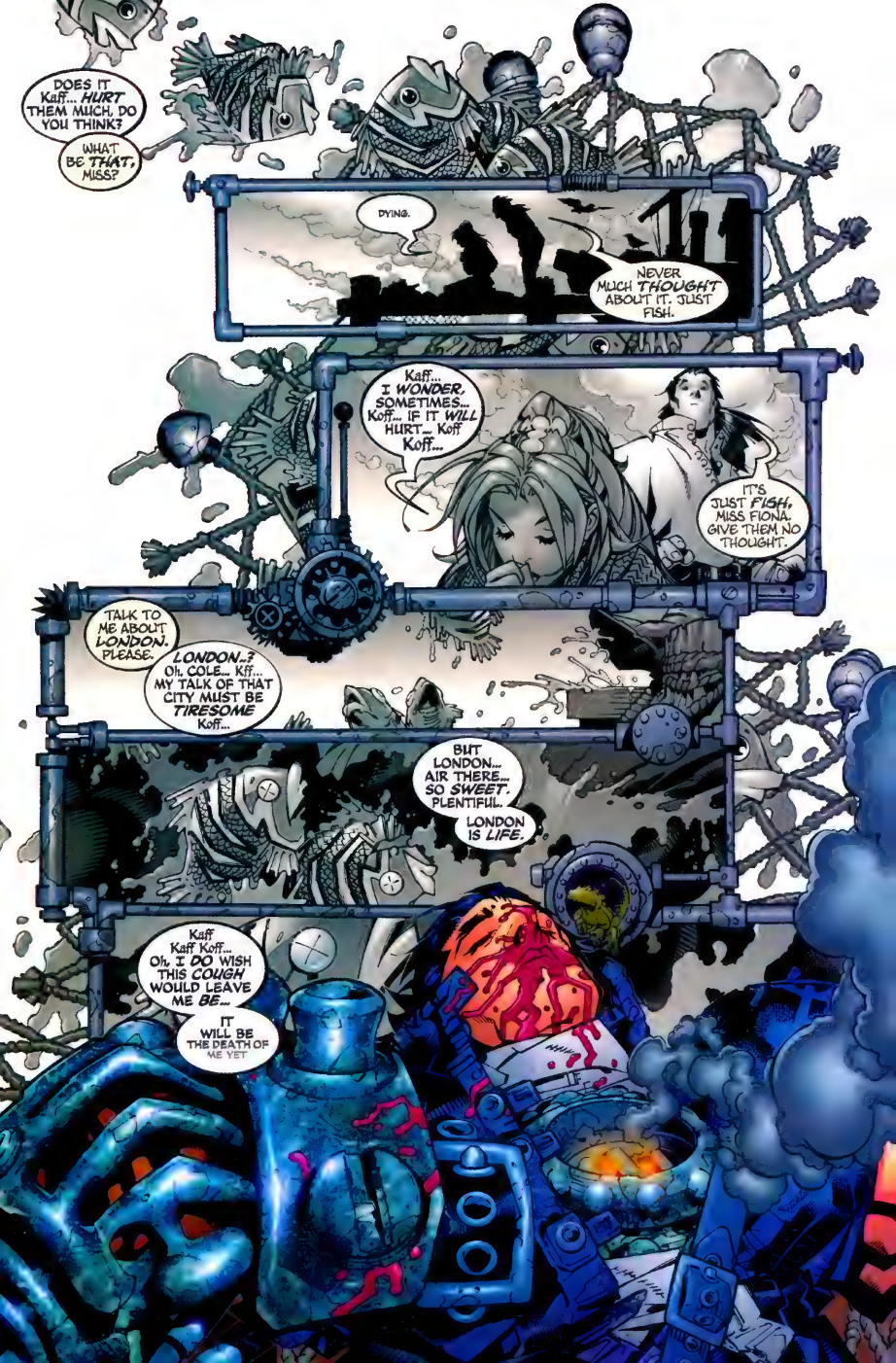
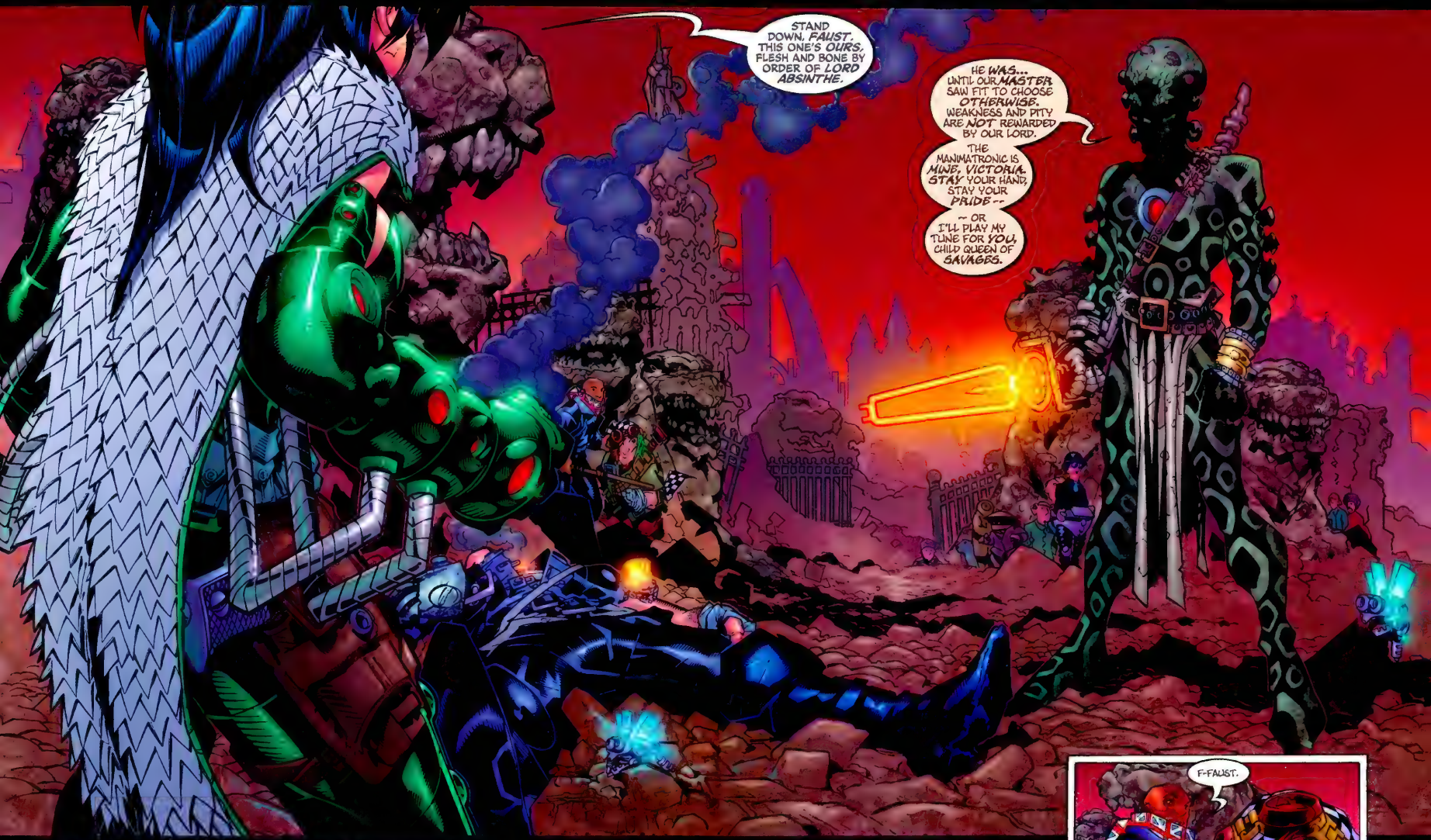

DOES IT Kaff... HURT THEM MUCH, DO YOU THINK?
WHAT BE THAT, MISS?
DYING.
NEVER MUCH THOUGHT ABOUT IT. JUST FISH.
Kaff... I WONDER, SOMETIMES... Koff... IF IT WILL HURT... Koff Koff...
IT'S JUST FISH, MISS FIONA. GIVE THEM NO THOUGHT.
TALK TO ME ABOUT LONDON. PLEASE.
LONDON..? Oh, COLE... Kff... MY TALK OF THAT CITY MUST BE TIRESOME Koff...
BUT LONDON... AIR THERE... SO SWEET. PLENTIFUL.
LONDON IS LIFE.
Kaff Kaff Koff... Oh, I DO WISH THIS COUGH WOULD LEAVE ME BE...
IT WILL BE THE DEATH OF ME YET

CLIFFHANGER PROUDLY PRESENTS

A CHRIS BACHALO ✣ JOE KELLY PRODUCTION


STAND DOWN, FAUST. THIS ONE'S OURS, FLESH AND BONE BY ORDER OF LORD ABSINTHE.
HE WAS... UNTIL OUR MASTER SAW FIT TO CHOOSE OTHERWISE. WEAKNESS AND PITY ARE NOT REWARDED BY OUR LORD.
THE MANIMATRONIC IS MINE, VICTORIA. STAY YOUR HAND, STAY YOUR PRIDE --
-- OR I'LL PLAY MY TUNE FOR YOU, CHILD QUEEN OF SAVAGES.

LOST HEART AND FOUND SOULS

BEING A CONTINUATION OF THE SAGA OF COLE BLAQUESMITH

Inked with Aplomb by Sir RICHARD FRIEND

Colored with Attitude by Sir BAD@SS

Lettered with Legerdemain by Sir RICHARD STARKINGS

Edited with Erudition by Sir SCOTT DUNBIER
Ably Assisted by Sir John Layman

LAST ISSUE

COLE BLAQUESMITH has discovered that he's been asleep for over one hundred years. Shocked that he's literally slept his life away, he flatly refuses the request of Sir Robert Peel to join the rebellion against Doctor Absinthe. Anxious to learn about the life he's missed, Cole ventures out into London, only to be attacked by Victoria, Queen of Savages, a mercenary charged with his capture. Their ensuing battle depletes his coal supply, leaving him breathless, helpless, and dying... Enter: FAUST.

YER MAN COLE'S COLLAPSED FR NO REASON, JUS' SPUTTER'D OUT AS IF --
WAIT A MINUTE...
WHAP!
OH, CRUMINY... I THINK I'VE 'AD A THOUGHT.
WE ARE NOT WEAK, FAUST. WE...
I WAS GIVING THE SOD A CHANCE TO FIGHT LIKE A MAN 'FORE I DROPPED HIM, FAUST. A MAN.
DIDN'T SOME-ONE ONCE TEACH US HARD LESSONS ON FIGHTING WITH HONOR?
MAYHAPS SOMEONE DID, ONCE... LONG AGO...
BUT THOSE DAYS FALL AWAY LIKE DEAD LEAVES. NOW ONLY THE MANJMATRONIC MATTERS.
IF THAT BE YOUR POSITION...
SO BE IT.
BLAM BLAM BLAM
FSSSH
BLAM BLAM
FSSSH
FSSSSSSH
FAST...
FWAPP
THIS CAN END ANOTHER WAY, VICTORIA. THINGS CAN RETURN.
REGAIN FAVOR ELSEWHERE. WALK AWAY.
THE QUEEN OF SAVAGES HAS OTHER SUBJECTS TO RULE.
HYEARGH!

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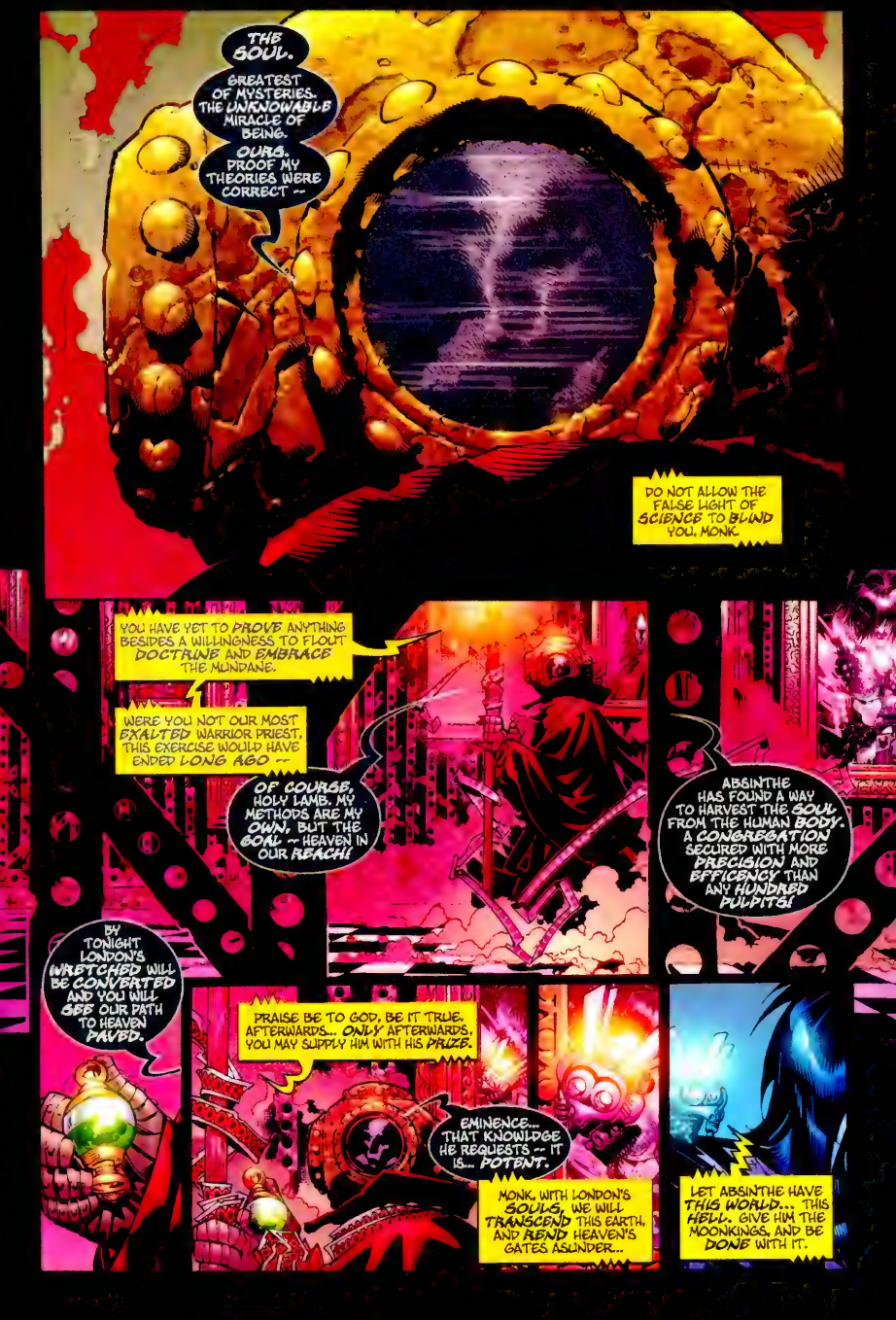
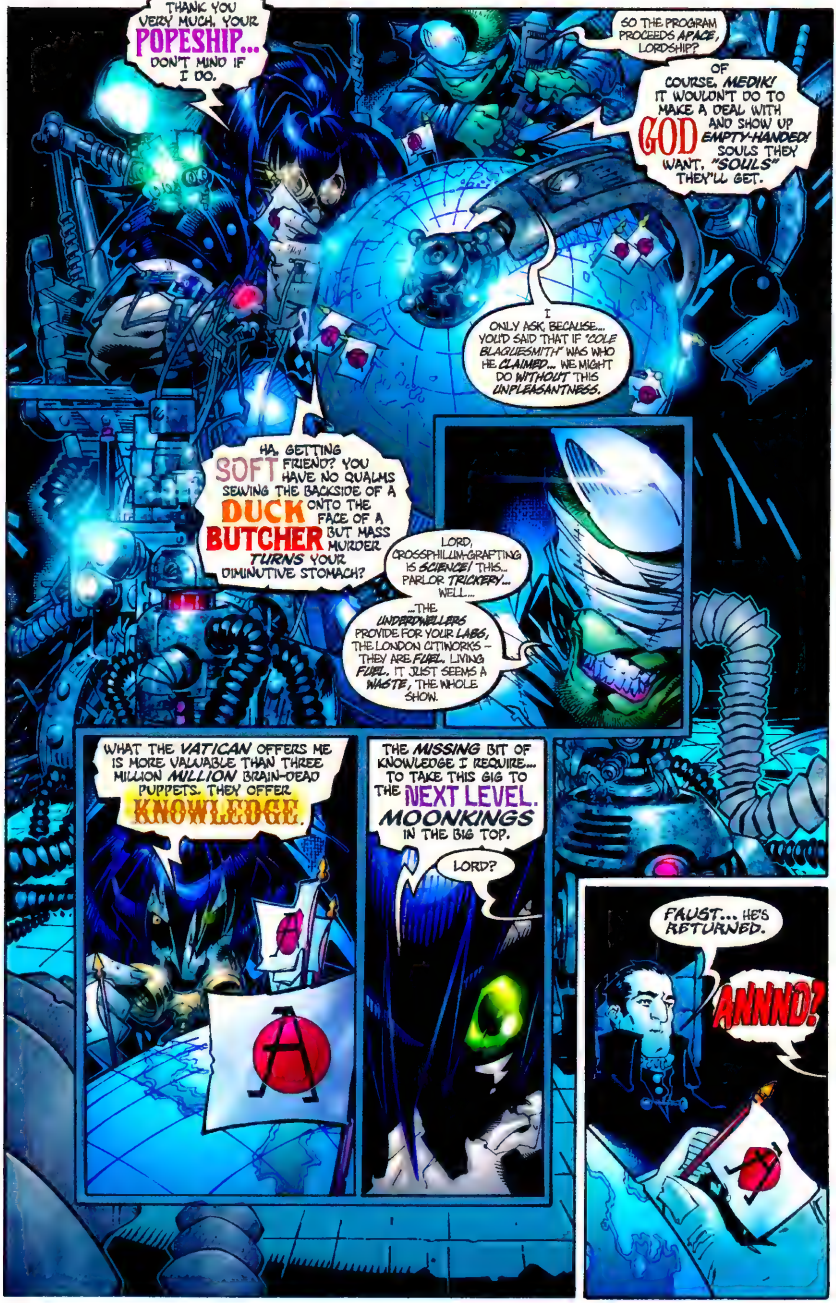
I DO NOT WANT FAVOR... I WANT FREEDOM!
COLE... HE'S A COWARD. HE DOESN'T WANT TO HELP THE RESISTANCE. WHY SHOULD WE--
BOY. HE IS THE RESISTANCE! HE JUS' DON'T KNOW IT YET!
"FREEDOM" IS WIND.
IT IS YOUR FACE REFLECTED ON WATER, VICTORIA.
SCHRAK
THERE IS ONLY THE WORLD... AND THE WORLD...
...IS ABSINTHE.
TRAGEDY, YES? WHY LIVE... IF IT BE WITHOUT YOUR LADY LOVE?
WITHOUT FIONA, WHY FIGHT?
HGKK
YIELD NOW, AND ABSINTHE CLAIMS HIS PREY...
OR DIE... AND ABSINTHE CLAIMS HIS PREY. WHY SNUFF THAT CANDLE... OVER THIS?
Hrrgk IT'S... MY... CHOICE!
OUR LORD CHOOSES FOR US. WE OBEY. SUCH IS LONDON'S BLOOD.
Y-YOU ALREADY STOLE MY OPPORTUNITY FOR LIFE, OLD FILTH!
I'LL NOT LET YOU DO IT AGAIN!
GCHLK
USE YOUR HEAD FOR SOMETHING OTHER THAN A BATTERING RAM, GIRL.
THIS DANCE ENDS ONLY TWO WAYS.

DIN'T I SAY WE WAS SITTIN' DUCKS? DIN'T I?
AW HELL, CRACKED IDEA. THIS! DUNNO IF THERE'S A PRIMER OR A PILOT LIGHT OR -- Sigh...
CREEAK
'F ANYONE'S LISTENIN' WHERE THE WHITE CLOUDS LIVE, 'S RANDY... AN' I NEEDS A WHOPPER OF A FAVOR HERE...
--GODS I HATE PLAYIN' HERO.
DUNK
Kaff-Kaff FRET NOT... I--
--Hakk--
I WILL --Koff-- I WILL... Kaff...
...SURVIVE.
FITTING, THAT I SEND YOU TO WARRIOR'S REST, VICTORIA.
I... I PREFER IT THIS WAY.
BUT KNOW THIS, GIRL... 'TIS NOT WITH ANGER. NEVER ANGER.
NEVER ANGER. BUT LOVE --
CRUNCH
GGGH!
LEAVE HER BE, DEMON!

GOOD ONE, MATE!
I'LL THROW AN EXTRA TUPPENCE IN COLLECTION THIS WEEK...
...WELL, A HAPPENNY AT LEAST.
WAP
KTAK
HYAGH!
THOOMP
FINALLY. SLEEPING ATLAS AWAKES.
LET'S SEE IF YOU WERE WORTH THE TROUBLE.
METHINKS THAT YOU, SIR...
YOU... I CAN HIT.

Kaff Koff Kaff
!?!
NO...
NOOOOOOOOOO
NO...
WHAT ARE YE DOING, YE DAFT--?
WAIT.
WAIT... JUST...
Kaff W-WHAT--?
WHAT IF I TOLD YOU, SHE DID NOT HAVE TO DIE? WHAT IF... YOU BOTH COULD BE SPARED THE RAVAGES AND PAIN OF THIS PLACE?
WHAT IF YOU COULD CHANGE THE WORLD?


THE SOUL.
GREATEST OF MYSTERIES. THE UNKNOWABLE MIRACLE OF BEING.
OURS. PROOF MY THEORIES WERE CORRECT --
DO NOT ALLOW THE FALSE LIGHT OF SCIENCE TO BLIND YOU, MONK.
YOU HAVE YET TO PROVE ANYTHING BESIDES A WILLINGNESS TO FLOUT DOCTRINE AND EMBRACE THE MUNDANE.
WERE YOU NOT OUR MOST EXALTED WARRIOR PRIEST, THIS EXERCISE WOULD HAVE ENDED LONG AGO --
OF COURSE, HOLY LAMB. MY METHODS ARE MY OWN, BUT THE GOAL -- HEAVEN IN OUR REACH!
ABSINTHE HAS FOUND A WAY TO HARVEST THE SOUL FROM THE HUMAN BODY. A CONGREGATION SECURED WITH MORE PRECISION AND EFFICIENCY THAN ANY HUNDRED PULPITS!
BY TONIGHT LONDON'S WRETCHED WILL BE CONVERTED AND YOU WILL SEE OUR PATH TO HEAVEN PAVED.
PRAISE BE TO GOD, BE IT TRUE. AFTERWARDS... ONLY AFTERWARDS, YOU MAY SUPPLY HIM WITH HIS PRIZE.
EMINENCE... THAT KNOWLDGE HE REQUESTS -- IT IS... POTENT.
MONK, WITH LONDON'S SOULS, WE WILL TRANSCEND THIS EARTH, AND REND HEAVEN'S GATES ASUNDER...
LET ABSINTHE HAVE THIS WORLD... THIS HELL. GIVE HIM THE MOONKINGS, AND BE DONE WITH IT.


THANK YOU VERY MUCH, YOUR POPESHIP... DON'T MIND IF I DO.
SO THE PROGRAM PROCEEDS APACE, LORDSHIP?
OF COURSE, MEDIK! IT WOULDN'T DO TO MAKE A DEAL WITH GOD AND SHOW UP EMPTY-HANDED! SOULS THEY WANT, "SOULS" THEY'LL GET.
I ONLY ASK, BECAUSE... YOU'D SAID THAT IF "COLE BLACKSMITH" WAS WHO HE CLAIMED... WE MIGHT DO WITHOUT THIS UNPLEASANTNESS.
HA. GETTING SOFT, FRIEND? YOU HAVE NO QUALMS SEWING THE BACKSIDE OF A DUCK ONTO THE FACE OF A BUTCHER, BUT MASS MURDER TURNS YOUR DIMINUTIVE STOMACH?
LORD, CROSSPHILIUM-GRAFTING IS SCIENCE! THIS... PARLOR TRICKERY... WELL...
...THE UNDERDWELLERS PROVIDE FOR YOUR LABS, THE LONDON CITYWORKS - THEY ARE FUEL. LIVING FUEL. IT JUST SEEMS A WASTE, THE WHOLE SHOW.
WHAT THE VATICAN OFFERS ME IS MORE VALUABLE THAN THREE MILLION MILLION BRAIN-DEAD PUPPETS. THEY OFFER KNOWLEDGE.
THE MISSING BIT OF KNOWLEDGE I REQUIRE... TO TAKE THIS BIG TO THE NEXT LEVEL. MOONKINGS IN THE BIG TOP.
LORD?
FAUST... HE'S RETURNED.
ANNND?

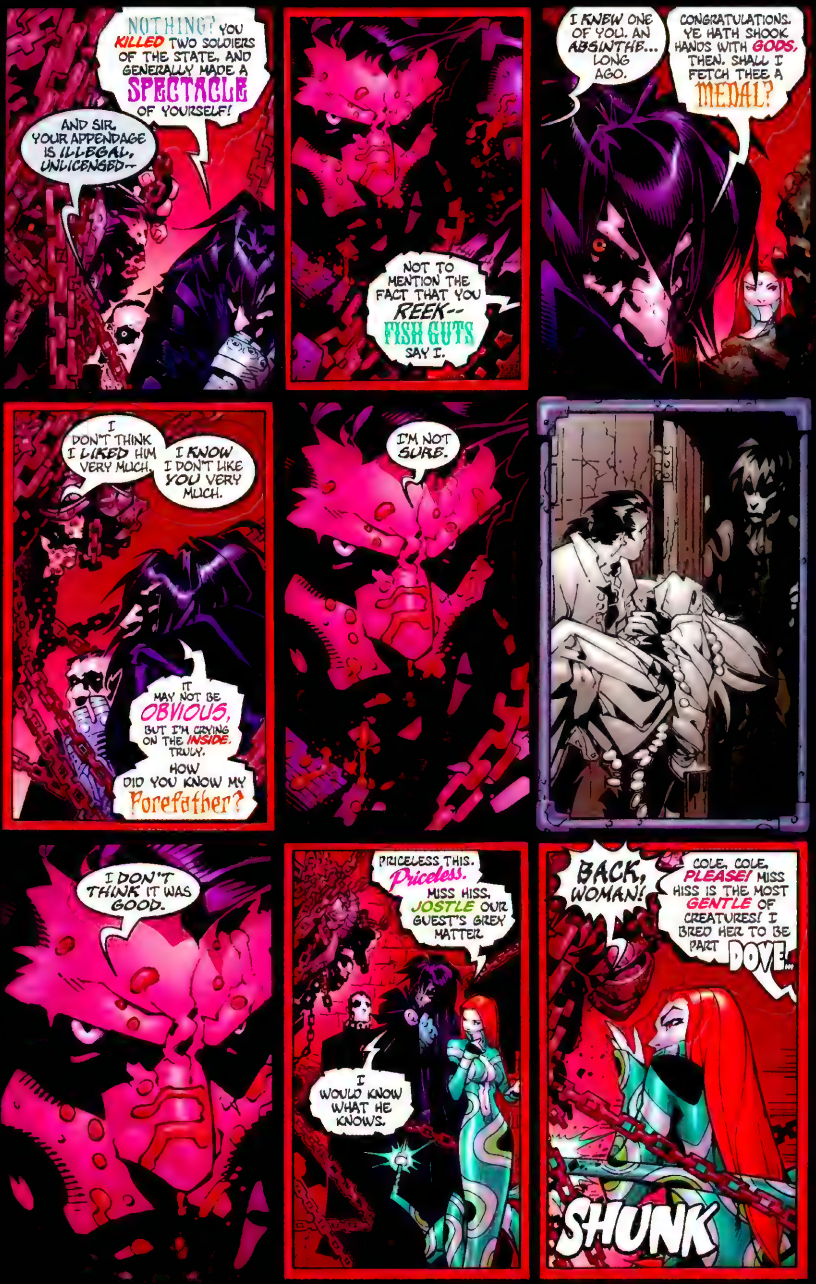
STUPID.
STUPID!
STUPID CLOD!
LAST CHANCE
Public House
WHY DID YOU ROLL OVER FOR FAUST? FOR HIM?!
KRAK
HE KNEW WHAT YOU MEANT TO ME, YOU WRETCHED DUMB BASTARD!
HE KNEW.
NO, Kaff BLADIESMITH. WAIT... DON'T..
THANK YOU, M'LADY... FOR BEING A DECENT "SAVAGE". YOU REMIND ME OF SOMEONE... SPECIAL.
OUR LORD CHOOSES FOR US. WE OBEY. OBEY.
OBEY.
STUPID STUPID GIRL.
WHAT WAITS YOU AT THE END OF THIS LIFE...? WHAT WAITS YOU?

HE WHAT?!!
DID HE PROTEST? DID HE RESIST--?!
WHAT WERE YOU TWO ABOUT DURING THE TUMULT?
THE VERY SAME QUESTION I ASKED OF HIM MYSELF, SIR. PULLARD HAS NO SENSE--
ZIP IT PIGEON-SHAGGER OR SO HELP ME!
SIR BOB, WHICH MANY WAYS DO YE WANTS ME TO SAY IT? I NEARLY LOSE ME BRAINPAN STOKIN' THE FOP'S FURNACE --
-- BUT IN THE ENDWAYS, DAFT BUGGER TURNED 'INSELF O'ER TO FAUST, GENTLE AS A SPRING FOAL!
YOU PEOPLE... SOMETIMES, I WONDER IF YOU WANT TO BE SAVED. YOU LIVE IN PERPETUAL SQUALOR. SEWAGE RUNS THROUGH YOUR VEINS --
YET YOU WILL NOT GAMBLE THIS NON-EXISTENCE FOR A PLAY AT FREEDOM, NOR EVEN THE HONOR OF DYING WITH INTEGRITY.
AND I AM THE PARIAH... BECAUSE I AM NOT OF YOUR CASTE. YOU ARE BEATEN.
STOVEPIPE? BRING THOSE TWO BACK IN -- PLUS THE GYPSY BOY.
WE'VE JUST BEEN INVITED TO THE END OF THE WORLD.
UM, RAND'... MAYBE WE SHOULD LEAVE THE MAN TO HIS SORROWS?
T'AIN'T THAT WE DON' LOVE YE, SIR BOB... JUST AIN'T EASY CONVINCIN' FOLKS THAT DYIN'S MUCH OF A TEA PARTY --
AYE. HERE, SIR BOB... SOME SWELL ASKED THIS FIND YE.
"BEATEN?" RIGHT... LET DEC' 'AVE 'IS WAR. I'LL GET MY SECOND WING BEFORE THEY FIRE A SINGLE SHOT--
BUGGER OFF, YOU.
SWEET LORD IN HEAVEN.

SHE LIVES. HERE IN LONDON. WHEN I THOUGHT HER ALL BUT LOST. MY CITY OPENS TO REVEAL THE DRAGON STILL SPITS FIRE.
SQUEKT?
SKIN ALABASTER, OR A SKY THAT NEVER WAS. EYES OF MEMORY SET IN HER PERFECT CRACKED SKULL. FRACTURED LIKE THIS PLACE, LIKE HER TEACHER.
THESE ARE TROUBLING TIMES FOR THE LONE WANDERER, MY LORD PLAYS GAMES WITH THE CHURCH. WITH ME. WITH LONDON. AND ALL I DO IS HONOR. OBEY. WAIT... FOR THE KEY TO REVEAL ITSELF.
URPT
HAVE I FOUND IT AT LAST IN A MAN MADE OF STEEL AND BONE? I BREATHE SHALLOW. ONCE. ANTICIPATION.
THAK
WHY?

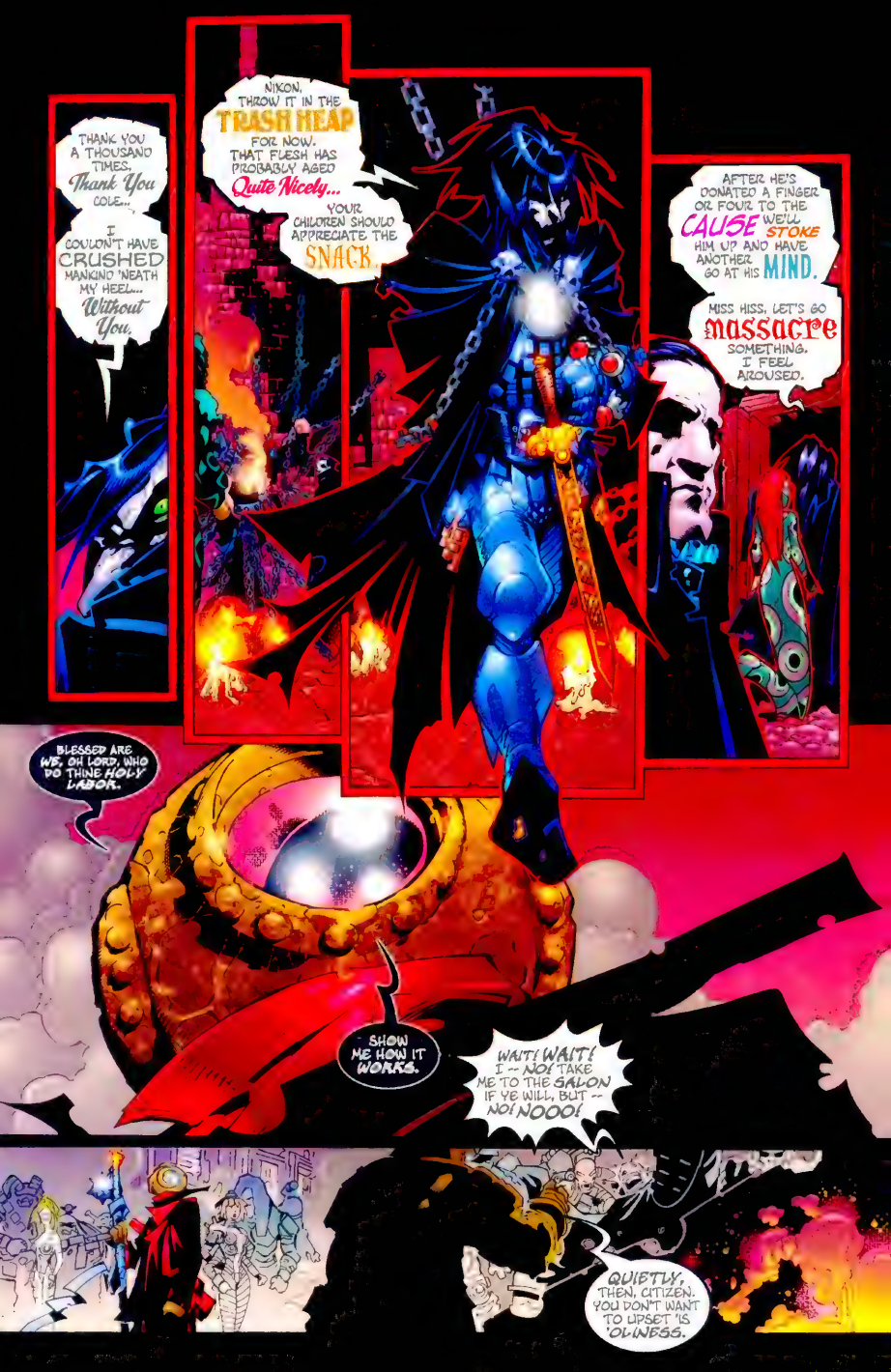
-- AND IT AIN'T This Cat, BABY. HE'S TAKING THE BIG SLEEP IN STYLE
Salutations, COLE BLAQUESMITH. I'M God.
OR IF YOU PREFER, "Lord ABSINTHE the Pretty." I'M NOT CHOOSY.

AT'S RIGHT, FRIENDS!
'AVE A GANDER! DOUBLE YER DOLLY, DOUBLE YER JOLLY!
WHAT AM I BID FOR THIS...
...FROZE. LIKE A BABY. LIKE THAT COWARD--
--ONE LOOK AT FAUST'S EYES... AND I FROZE.
GODS, RIKK. 'M SORRY... 'M SO SORRY--
KLUNK
CHIN UP, SON. WE'LL MAKE A HERO OUT OF YOU YET--
--OR A MARTYR-- THE NIGHT'S YOUNG.
BUCKLE UP, MATE. THE RESISTANCE CALLS.
SHOW US DEM ROOVES YE LIKE STALKIN' SO MUCH, EH?
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME... "HIGHNESS?"
I'VE DONE NOTHING TO DESERVE THIS.


NOTHING? YOU KILLED TWO SOLDIERS OF THE STATE, AND GENERALLY MADE A SPECTACLE OF YOURSELF!
AND SIR, YOUR APPENDAGE IS ILLEGAL, UNLICENSED--
NOT TO MENTION THE FACT THAT YOU REEK-- FISH GUTS SAY I.
I KNEW ONE OF YOU. AN ABSINTHE... LONG AGO.
CONGRATULATIONS. YE HATH SHOOK HANDS WITH GODS, THEN. SHALL I FETCH THEE A MEDAL?
I DON'T THINK I LIKED HIM VERY MUCH.
I KNOW I DON'T LIKE YOU VERY MUCH.
IT HAV NOT BE OBVIOUS, BUT I'M CRYING ON THE INSIDE. TRULY.
HOW DID YOU KNOW MY Forefather?
I'M NOT SURE.
I DON'T THINK IT WAS GOOD.
PRICELESS THIS. Priceless. MISS HISS. JOSTLE OUR GUEST'S GREY MATTER.
I WOULD KNOW WHAT HE KNOWS.
BACK, WOMAN!
COLE, COLE, PLEASE! MISS HISS IS THE MOST GENTLE OF CREATURES! I BRED HER TO BE PART DOVE...
SHUNK

YEARGH!
THE OTHER PART COBRA. I'M QUITE TICKLED WITH THE RESULTS.
HIS MIND... BROKEN YOUR HIGHNESS.
HE... KNOWS NOT CLEARLY ABSINTHE THE FIRST...
...NOR HOLDS HE THE INFORMATION YOU SEEK.
ALL THAT REMAINS AFTER... HIS LONG SLEEP, I THINK... IS A WOMAN.
QUITE THE LOVELY THAT ONE. A WORK OF ART AND HEART...
...BUT THE REST, MY LORD, IS ABYSS.
PERMANENT?
NOTHING IN THE MIND IS PERMANENT, WHILE THE BODY LIVES. IN TIME, HE MAY RECALL BITS AND PIECES...
BUT DESPITE THE MMMMMM... PHYSICAL POSSIBILITIES IS BODY ENTREATS... IN MY PROFESSIONAL OPINION, HIS MIND IS MUSH.
ONE HUNDRED YEARS... WAITING. COLE BLAQUESMITH... YOU VEX ME.
VEX ME VEX ME!
CRUNCH
AT LEAST YOU STILL HAVE HER IN YOUR MIND... YES?
DEAR LITTLE PORCELAIN Fiona. THANKS BE TO GAWD.
WH-WHAT?
FIONA, FIONA, BI-BONA, BANANAFANA --
HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT FIONA?! HOW DO YOU KNOW HER NAME?
WHO ARE YOU?
S-SIR. THE CHAINS --
DIDN'T MEAN TO TWIST YOUR RIVETS, BOY! JUST I THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE TO HEAR HER NAME OUT LOUD!
RRONNNK
BUT IT HAS BEEN SO LONG, HASN'T IT? AND SHE IS SO VERY VERY Dead ISN'T SHE?
COLOR ME RUDE, THEN. NEXT TIME, I SHALL HAVE TO REMEMBER MY MANNERS.

ALL THE SAME, WITH THE LITTLE TROLLOP DECEASED--
HYARGH!
PFFSSH
-- YOU SHAN'T BE NEEDING THIS REDUNDANT ORGAN ANY MORE, SHALL YOU?
GASSPP!
SHE'S DEAD, BOY! SEE?
SO NO USE HAVE YE FOR THIS REDUNDANT ORGAN, EH? HAVE YE?
YOU.
ME
BY THE BY, STUD... IN MY OLD AGE, I HAVE MASTERED ONE SOCIAL GRACE...
...GRATITUDE.
CRUNNCH


THANK YOU A THOUSAND TIMES. Thank You COLE...
I COULDN'T HAVE CRUSHED MANKIND 'NEATH MY HEEL... Without You.
NIKON, THROW IT IN THE TRASH HEAP FOR NOW. THAT FLESH HAS PROBABLY AGED Quite Nicely...
YOUR CHILDREN SHOULD APPRECIATE THE SNACK.
AFTER HE'S DONATED A FINGER OR FOUR TO THE CAUSE WE'LL STOKE HIM UP AND HAVE ANOTHER GO AT HIS MIND.
MISS HISS, LET'S GO massacre SOMETHING. I FEEL AROUSED.
BLESSED ARE WE, OH LORD, WHO DO THINE HOLY LABOR.
SHOW ME HOW IT WORKS.
WAIT! WAIT! I -- NO! TAKE ME TO THE SALON IF YE WILL, BUT -- NO! NOOO!
QUIETLY, THEN, CITIZEN. YOU DON'T WANT TO UPSET 'IS 'OLINESS.

NOOOO...
NOOO!
OUR FATHER --
?
SHUK
THIP
THAP
REJOICE, BROTHER. YOUR SOUL IS FREE. GLORY TO HOSANNAH IN THE HIGHEST.
MORE, PLEASE.
SWEET JESU... IT'S TRUE.

THE VERY SOULS OF FOUR COUNTRYMEN... BARTERED AWAY.
'S THE GODDAMBLIN' APOCALYPSE, THIS IS.
TH-THERE'S GOT TO BE SOMETHING -- WE CAN HIDE -- WE CAN RUN --
YOU CAN DO WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE A LIFETIME AGO...
YOU?!
PUT ACTION BEHIND THOSE PRETTY WORDS YE SPEW... AND GIVE HIM A DAMN WAR.
JUST NEED THE RIGHT SOLDIERS.
DID IT HURT MUCH..?
...THE DYING?
NOT HALF AS MUCH AS THE LIVING, I THINK.
ARE YOU SURE? IS THIS BETTER?
I...
I'M WITH YOU.
FOREVER...
SO YES. ISN'T THIS BETTER?
... FIONA?
FIONA?

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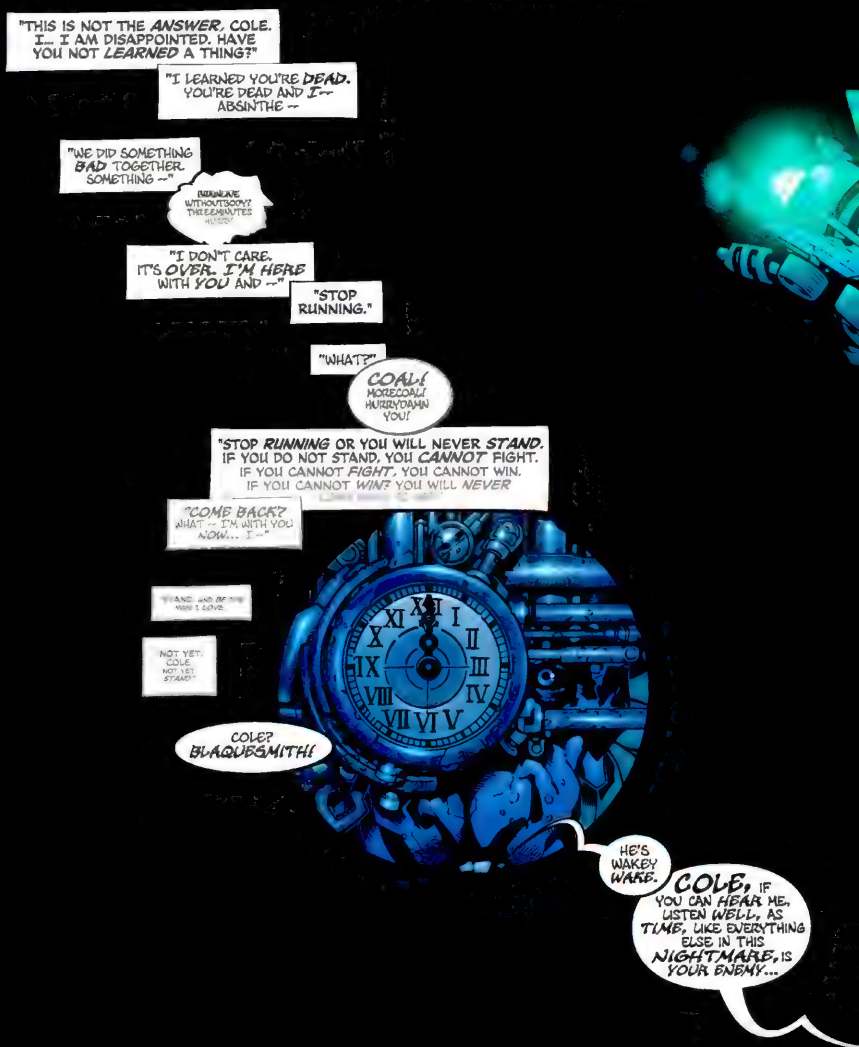
LAST ISSUE

The resourceful Rabid Randy rescued Cole Blaquesmith from near death, only to watch him surrender to the enigmatic Faust. Imprisoned, Cole is confronted by Lord Absinthe, who unsuccessfully seeks information. Frustrated, Absinthe taunts Cole, revealing that he knows the truth about the mysterious circumstances of Cole's life -- and Fiona's -- having been there himself. Enraged, Cole attacks Absinthe, only to have his "heart" torn out by the malevolent dictator for a second time.


"THIS IS NOT THE ANSWER, COLE. I... I AM DISAPPOINTED. HAVE YOU NOT LEARNED A THING?"
"I LEARNED YOU'RE DEAD. YOU'RE DEAD AND I-- ABSINTHE --
"WE DID SOMETHING BAD TOGETHER. SOMETHING --"
IMMEDIATE WITHOUTSOON? THREE MINUTES HUSH!
"I DON'T CARE. IT'S OVER. I'M HERE WITH YOU AND --"
"STOP RUNNING."
"WHAT?"
COAL! MORECOAL! HURRYDAMN YOU!
"STOP RUNNING OR YOU WILL NEVER STAND. IF YOU DO NOT STAND, YOU CANNOT FIGHT. IF YOU CANNOT FIGHT, YOU CANNOT WIN. IF YOU CANNOT WIN? YOU WILL NEVER
"COME BACK? WHAT -- I'M WITH YOU NOW... I --"
"I AND OF THE WAY I LOVE
NOT YET, COLE. NOT YET. STAND!
COLE? BLAQUESMITH!
HE'S WAKEY WAKE.
COLE, IF YOU CAN HEAR ME, LISTEN WELL, AS TIME, LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE IN THIS NIGHTMARE, IS YOUR ENEMY...

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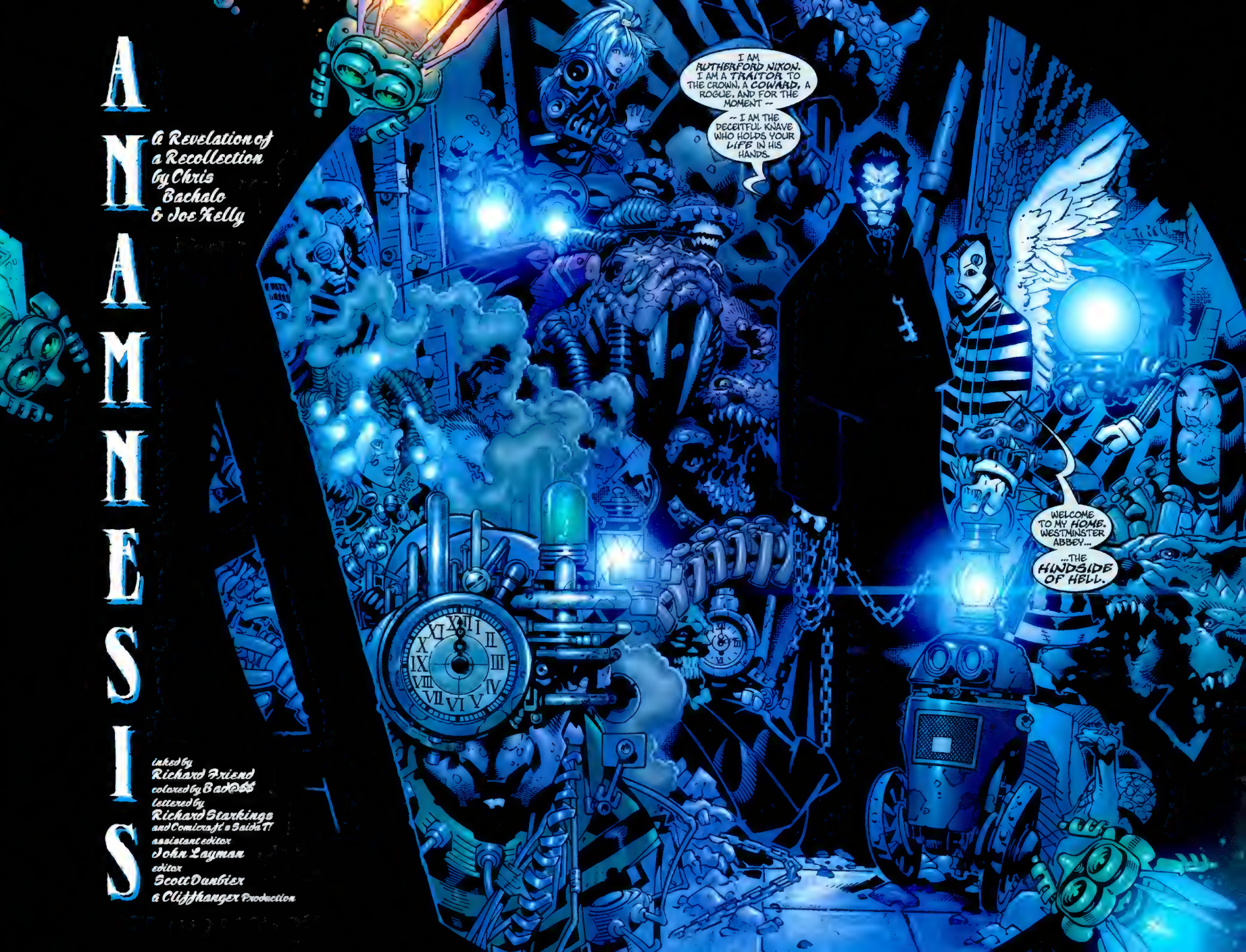
A Revelation of a Recollection by Chris Bachalo & Joe Kelly


I AM RUTHERFORD NIXON. I AM A TRAITOR TO THE CROWN, A COWARD, A ROGUE, AND FOR THE MOMENT --
-- I AM THE DECEITFUL KNAVE WHO HOLDS YOUR LIFE IN HIS HANDS.
WELCOME TO MY HOME. WESTMINSTER ABBEY...
...THE HINDSIDE OF HELL.

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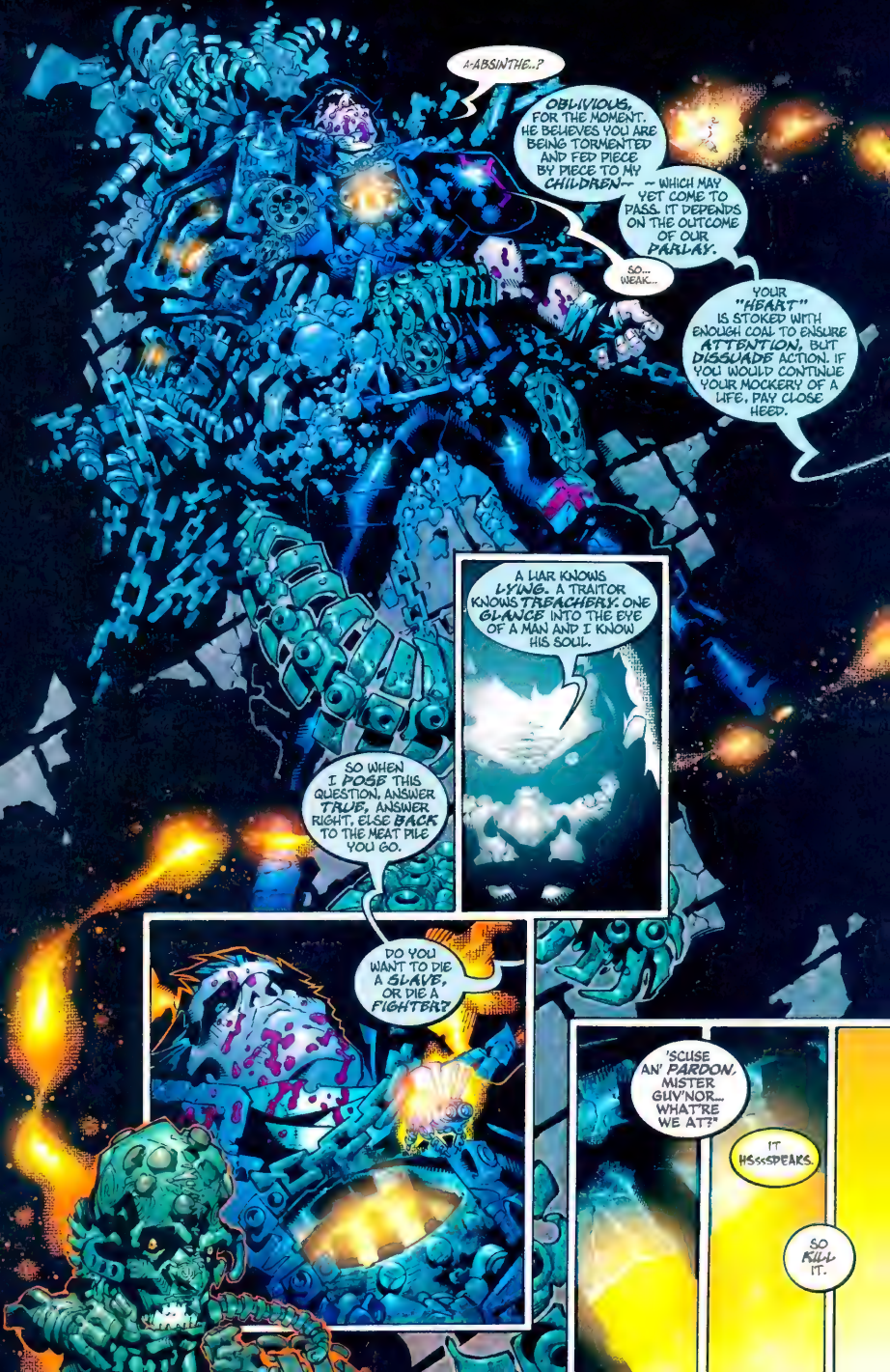
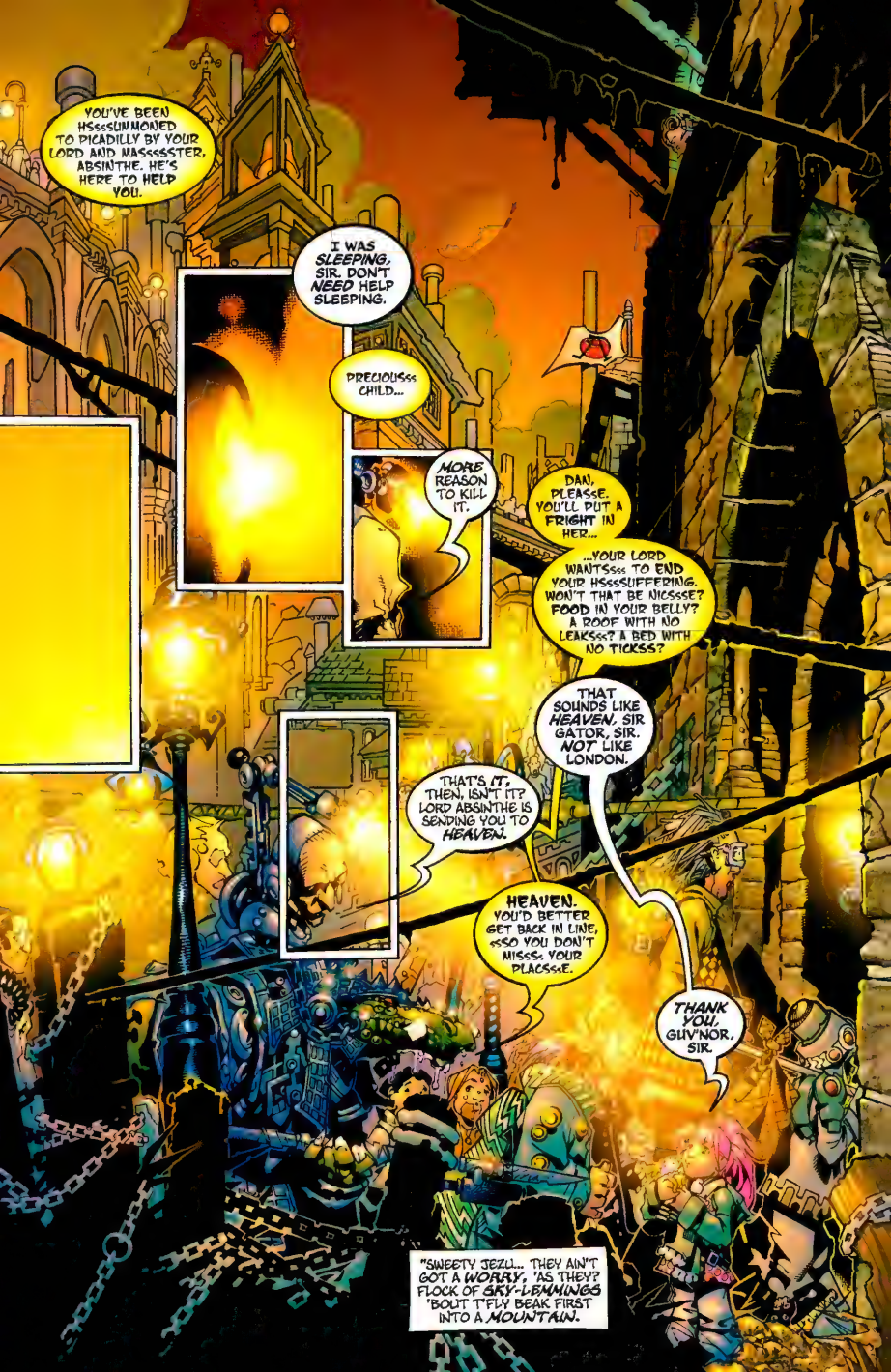
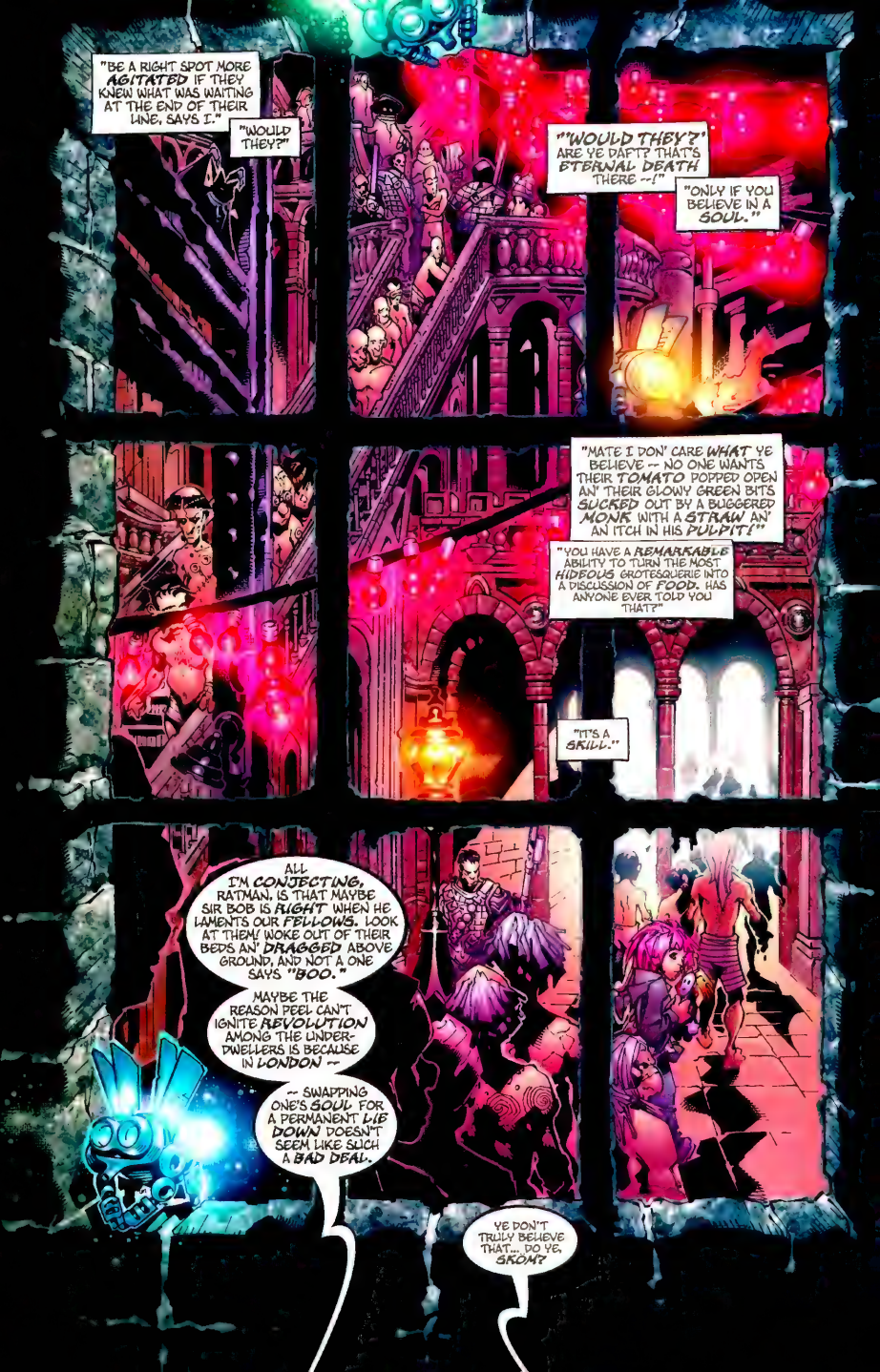

A-ABSINTHE...?
OBLIVIOUS, FOR THE MOMENT. HE BELIEVES YOU ARE BEING TORMENTED AND FED PIECE BY PIECE TO MY CHILDREN-- -- WHICH MAY YET COME TO PASS. IT DEPENDS ON THE OUTCOME OF OUR PARLAY.
SO... WEAK...
YOUR "HEART" IS STOKED WITH ENOUGH COAL TO ENSURE ATTENTION, BUT DISSUADE ACTION. IF YOU WOULD CONTINUE YOUR MOCKERY OF A LIFE, PAY CLOSE HEED.
A LIAR KNOWS LYING. A TRAITOR KNOWS TREACHERY. ONE GLANCE INTO THE EYE OF A MAN AND I KNOW HIS SOUL.
SO WHEN I POSE THIS QUESTION, ANSWER TRUE, ANSWER RIGHT, ELSE BACK TO THE MEAT PILE YOU GO.
DO YOU WANT TO DIE A SLAVE, OR DIE A FIGHTER?
'SCUSE AN' PARDON, MISTER GUV'NOR... WHAT'RE WE AT?"
IT HSssSPEAKS.
SO KILL IT.

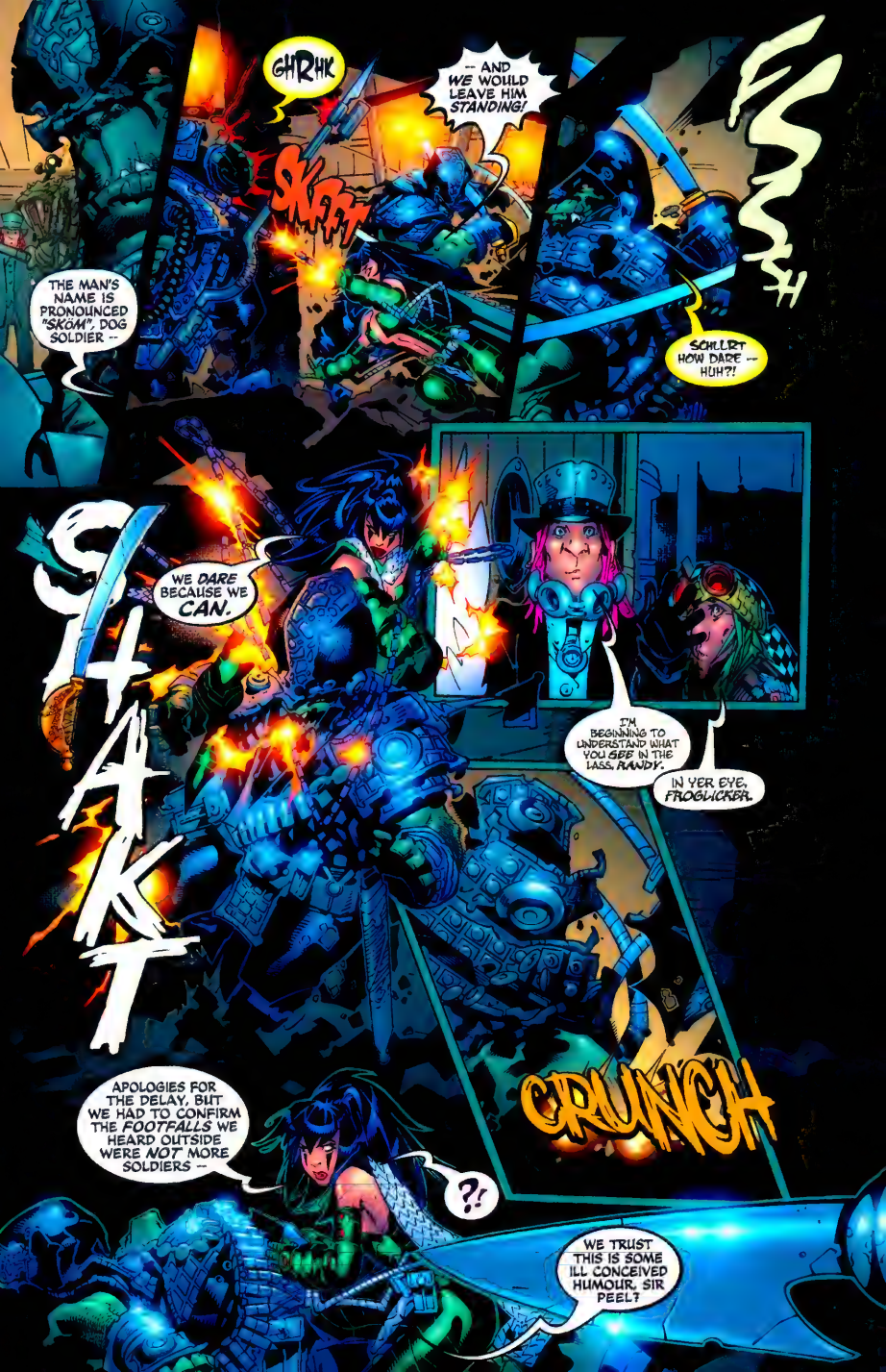

YOU'VE BEEN HSSSSUMMONED TO PICADILLY BY YOUR LORD AND MASSSSSTER, ABSINTHE. HE'S HERE TO HELP YOU.
I WAS SLEEPING, SIR. DON'T NEED HELP SLEEPING.
PRECIOUSSS CHILD...
MORE REASON TO KILL IT.
DAN, PLEASSE. YOU'LL PUT A FRIGHT IN HER...
...YOUR LORD WANTSSSS TO END YOUR HSSSSUFFERING. WON'T THAT BE NICSSSE? FOOD IN YOUR BELLY? A ROOF WITH NO LEAKSSS? A BED WITH NO TICKSS?
THAT SOUNDS LIKE HEAVEN, SIR GATOR, SIR. NOT LIKE LONDON.
THAT'S IT, THEN, ISN'T IT? LORD ABSINTHE IS SENDING YOU TO HEAVEN.
HEAVEN. YOU'D BETTER GET BACK IN LINE, SSSO YOU DON'T MISSSS YOUR PLACSSSE.
THANK YOU, GUV'NOR, SIR.
"SWEETY JEZU... THEY AIN'T GOT A WORRY, 'AS THEY? FLOCK OF SKY-LEMMINGS 'BOUT T'FLY BEAK FIRST INTO A MOUNTAIN.


"BE A RIGHT SPOT MORE AGITATED IF THEY KNEW WHAT WAS WAITING AT THE END OF THEIR LINE, SAYS I."
"WOULD THEY?"
"WOULD THEY?" ARE YE DAFT? THAT'S ETERNAL DEATH THERE --!"
"ONLY IF YOU BELIEVE IN A SOUL."
"MATE I DON' CARE WHAT YE BELIEVE -- NO ONE WANTS THEIR TOMATO POPPED OPEN AN' THEIR GLOWY GREEN BITS SUCKED OUT BY A BUGGERED MONK WITH A STRAW AN' AN ITCH IN HIS PULPIT!"
"YOU HAVE A REMARKABLE ABILITY TO TURN THE MOST HIDEOUS GROTESQUERIE INTO A DISCUSSION OF FOOD. HAS ANYONE EVER TOLD YOU THAT?"
"IT'S A SKILL."
ALL I'M CONJECTING, RATMAN, IS THAT MAYBE SIR BOB IS RIGHT WHEN HE LAMENTS OUR FELLOWS. LOOK AT THEM! WOKE OUT OF THEIR BEDS AN' DRAGGED ABOVE GROUND, AND NOT A ONE SAYS "BOO."
MAYBE THE REASON PEEL CAN'T IGNITE REVOLUTION AMONG THE UNDER-DWELLERS IS BECAUSE IN LONDON --
-- SWAPPING ONE'S SOUL FOR A PERMANENT LIE DOWN DOESN'T SEEM LIKE SUCH A BAD DEAL.
YE DON'T TRULY BELIEVE THAT... DO YE, SKOM?

...
I DON'T KNOW. SEEN' THEM... KNOWIN' WHAT'S T'COME BUT UNABLE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT --
PEOPLE... PEOPLE WANT TO BE FREE, SKOM. THEY MAY NOT LOOK IT, BEIN' USED TO THE FEEL OF THAT YOLK 'ROUND THEIR NECKS -- -- BUT IF YE DON' BELIEVE IN A SOUL AN' THE ETERNAL HEREAFTER, YE DAMN WELL BETTER BELIEVE IN FREEDOM.
LOOKS LIKE THERE'S STILL SOME TIME 'AFORE THE SHOW STARTS. LET'S SLINK OUT OF HERE AN' TELL PEEL WHAT'S WHAT.
E'S PROBABLY GONE BONKERS STUCK WITH THAT VICTORIA ALL THIS TIME...
"HOPE... THE PROMISE OF BETTER DAYS IS MORE Motivational AND MORE POTENT THAN THE BETTER DAYS THEMSELVES --
"WHICH IS Why IT MUST BE EXCISED FROM THE LOWER CLASSES WITH A SURGEON'S PRECISION.
"CIVIL POLICY, IN A NUTSHELL: GENERATE MANAGEABLE QUANTA OF A 'HOPE' AMONG THE GREAT UNWASHED. THIS GENERATES OPTIMAL LEVELS OF LABOUR --
"-- THEN SNATCH SAID 'HOPE' FROM THEM AND STRANGLE IT UNTIL ITS EYES POP AND IT'S Viscera RAIN DOWN ON WHOMEVER'S LEFT STANDING.
"THIS GENERATES RESPECT, Fear AND A GOOD DEAL OF RAW MATERIAL FOR YOUR BODY SHOPS, MEDICINE PLANTS AND SUCH."

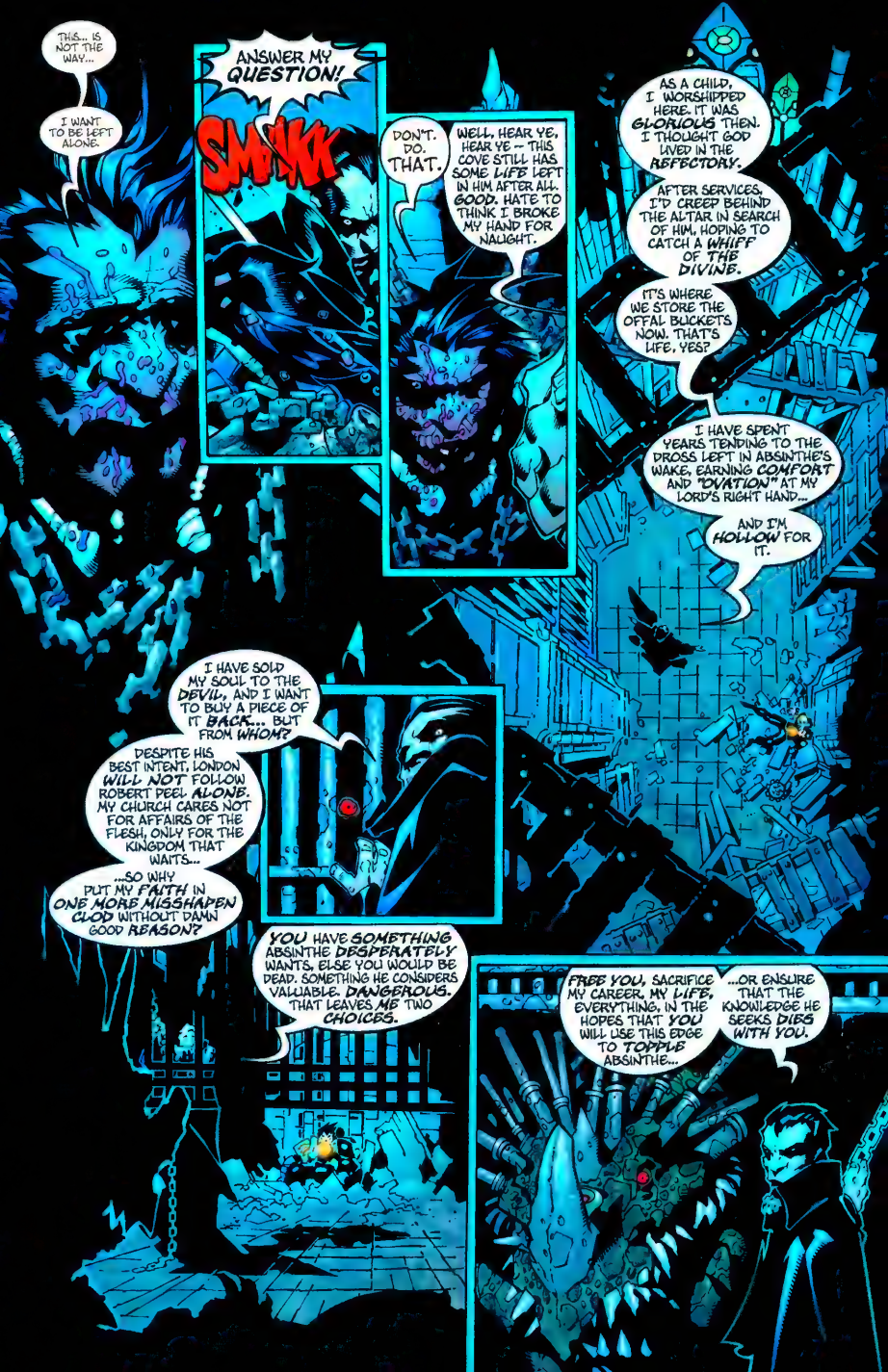
"BITE TWICE FROM THIS BOUTIQUE APPLE, AND OFFER THE EVENT AS ENTERTAINMENT TO THE UPPER CLASSES.'
"IT DISTRACTS, IT THRILLS, BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY...
"...IT REMINDS THEM NEVER TO BET ON YOUR BAD SIDE."
YOU ARE THE CLEVER ONE, LORD.
IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER... I'D SAY someone WAS PLAYING THE SNITTY QUEEN.
Compliant FAUST?
...
NEVER, LORD.
BUT I AM A WARRIOR. SUCH... CONTRIVANCE IS NOT MY TASTE. BLOOD AND SCREAMS ARE MY LANGUAGE. NOT LIES AND GAMES.
HAD I THE CHOICE, WE WOULD STORM THE VATICAN AND TAKE WHAT WE WANT. IT WOULD BE...
...TRUE. HONORABLE.
OH, I FORGOT... YOU'RE NOT THE KILLER WHO STRIKES DOWN BOYS IN THE STREETS. YOU'RE
FAUST! "THE Honorable Assassin."
SILLY ME.
I WONDER IF VICTORIA KNEW THAT WHEN YOU "HONORED" HER and STARLIN?
I'LL MAKE YOU A DEAL, FAUST...
...BRING ME MORE UNDERWELLERS. GRIND THEM AND INJECT THEIR PITUITARY GLANDS WITH RADIUM --
-- AND TRICK THE VATICAN INTO HANDING US THE KEY TO THE POPE'S WASHROOM --
-- AND I'LL FEEL GUILTY FOR YOU. I promise.
SOMEONE PLAY SOMETHING SORROWFUL FOR OUR LONE WANDERER -- A Jig!

WHY D'YOU THINK VICKI TURNED COATS F'R US, ANYWAY?
SHE'S NOT YOUR TYPE, MATE. DROP IT.
SQUIRT OFF, YOU! I'M SERIOUS!
ONE WORD, LAD. MONEY.
SHE LOST HER DINNER TO FAUST, THEN TURNS TO SEE SIR BOB IN FANCY THREADS AN' FIGURES 'E'S HER GOLDPOT.
'SALWAYS ABOUT THE BELT TO YOU, AIN'T IT? SELL YER MOTHER FOR A CORNISH PASTIE.
IN A HEART-BEAT, LAD.
SIR BOB, SIR! WITH URGENCY AND DEPORTMENT I REPORT --
OH.
BAD.
SHHK -- NO "SIR ANYONE" HERE, LADS -- SCHLURT JUS' YER FILTHY "REVOLUTIONARY" RATS!
DID I SAY "SIR BOB?" I MEANT -- EFF -- SIR-LOIN, OF BEEF!
SHUT UP AND DROP, SCUM!


GHRHK
-- AND WE WOULD LEAVE HIM STANDING!
SKFFT
FSSSH
THE MAN'S NAME IS PRONOUNCED "SKÖM", DOG SOLDIER --
SCHLLRT HOW DARE -- HUH?!
SHAKT
WE DARE BECAUSE WE CAN.
I'M BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU SEE IN THE LASS, RANDY.
IN YER EYE, FROGLICKER.
CRUNCH
APOLOGIES FOR THE DELAY, BUT WE HAD TO CONFIRM THE FOOTFALLS WE HEARD OUTSIDE WERE NOT MORE SOLDIERS --
?!
WE TRUST THIS IS SOME ILL CONCEIVED HUMOUR, SIR PEEL?

NO JOKES, MISS. NOT BY US, ANYWAY.
RANDY, SKOM, SEARCH HER. STOVEPIPE, IF SHE SO MUCH AS SCRATCHES HER NOSE WITH THOSE GAUNTLETS, RUN HER THROUGH.
WHEN A KNOWN OPERATIVE OF THE STATE SUDDENLY "BEFRIENDS" THE RESISTANCE, I TAKE ALL PRECAUTIONS.
THE DEFEAT OF TWO EXPENDABLE DOG SOLDIERS HARDLY BUYS ADMISSION TO OUR INNER STRONGHOLD, LET ALONE MY TRUST, CHILD.
THERE IS NO TIME FOR THIS, PEEL.
PARDON THE POKIN', MISS... S'ALL FR THE CAUSE.
THOSE TWO WERE A SURVEY TEAM. THERE WILL BE NO MORE. YOU HAVE SEEN WHAT ABE HAS PLANNED FOR YOUR KIN ABOVE.
DO YOU WANT TO RESCUE BLAQUESMITH AND START YOUR REVOLUTION OR DON'T YOU?!
WHAT HAPPENED, MI'LADY GROW A BLEEDIN' HEART AFTER SHE HANDED COLE OVER TO FAUST?
...
BLAQUESMITH SAVED OUR SKIN FROM FAUST, AND WE WOULD RETURN THE FAVOR.
WE DO NOT LIKE TO LEAVE OUR DEBTS LONG STANDING NO MORE, NO LESS.
HER HIGHNESS SEEMS ONNA UP AN' UP. NO BOTBUGS, NO HEARY DEVICES --
-- NO HIDIN' PLACES EITHER -- OOH LA LA!
GOOD.
SHE MAY LEAVE WITH HER LIFE, THEN.
LEAVE? BUT SHE--
OUR PEOPLE ARE ABOUT TO BE MASSACRED. STRIPPED OF THEIR SOULS FOR ABSINTHE'S PLEASURE.
I WILL NOT SPARE A SINGLE WARRIOR ON A ROGUE WHO'S TURNED HIS BACK ON HONOR AND RESPONSIBILITY, TIME AND AGAIN, WHILE THEY DIE ABOVE.
COLE BLAQUESMITH IS ON HIS OWN... AS HE WANTS IT. TODAY, IF WE LIVE OR DIE, IT WILL BE WITHOUT HIM.

PEEL'S A PROUD MAN, VIC... MAYBE TOO PROUD, IF'N YER SERIOUS 'BOUT HELPIN' US SAVIN' COLE --
--NOW'S YER TIME TO CROW 'BOUT IT.
PEEL! THIS IS NOT OVER! WE WOULD SPEAK --
I'M CERTAIN YOU WOULD.
AMONG THE SHADOW DROPLETS AND THE BLOOD PIPES OF LONDON'S BELLY... A SCENT. BLADE ACROSS GRANITE. YOU, VICTORIA.
TWICE AND AGAIN OUR PATHS CROSS, LITTLE DRAGON.
WHEREUPON THE WINDING ROAD STAND YOU THIS TIME?
I BELIEVE AN EASY ANSWER LIES AT THE END OF THAT QUESTION, ASSASSIN.
TRAITOROUS WENCH --
HATE US NOT, SLAVE. YOUR WORLD IS SEWAGE, AND FEAR, AND MISGUIDED "HONOR"...
...IT SIMPLY DID NOT SUIT US.
PERHAPS MAGNANIMOUS FAUST WILL ALLOW A HUMBLE "OPERATIVE" --
KRAK
-- THE HONOR OF BRINGING THE MASTER THIS PRIZE --
-- THAT FAVOR MAY BE AGAIN HERS?

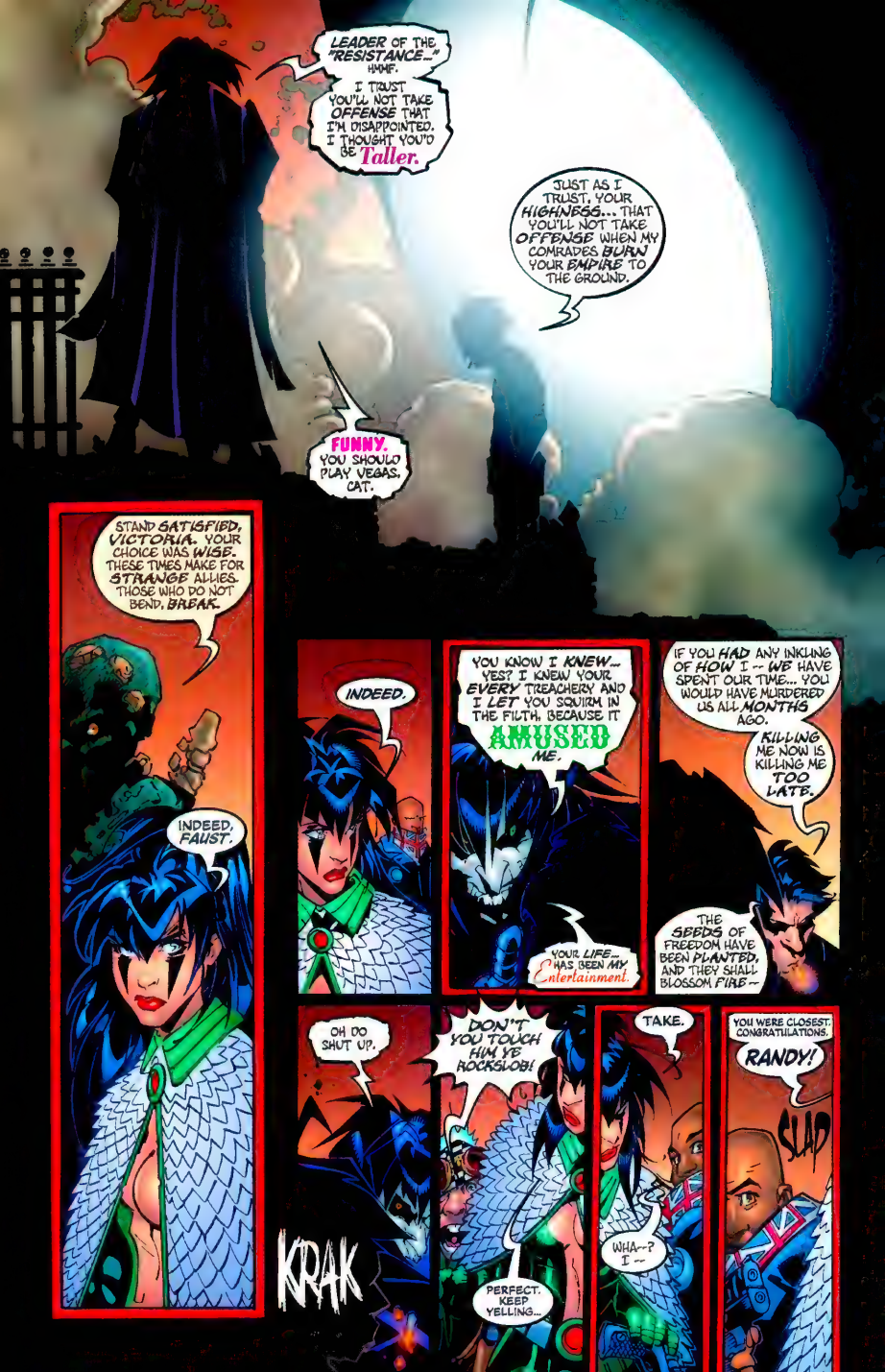

THIS... IS NOT THE WAY...
I WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE.
ANSWER MY QUESTION!
SMAKK
DON'T. DO. THAT.
WELL, HEAR YE, HEAR YE — THIS COVE STILL HAS SOME LIFE LEFT IN HIM AFTER ALL. GOOD. HATE TO THINK I BROKE MY HAND FOR NAUGHT.
AS A CHILD, I WORSHIPPED HERE. IT WAS GLORIOUS THEN. I THOUGHT GOD LIVED IN THE REFECTORY.
AFTER SERVICES, I'D CREEP BEHIND THE ALTAR IN SEARCH OF HIM, HOPING TO CATCH A WHIFF OF THE DIVINE.
IT'S WHERE WE STORE THE OFFAL BUCKETS NOW. THAT'S LIFE, YES?
I HAVE SPENT YEARS TENDING TO THE DROSS LEFT IN ABSINTHE'S WAKE, EARNING COMFORT AND "OVATION" AT MY LORD'S RIGHT HAND...
AND I'M HOLLOW FOR IT.
I HAVE SOLD MY SOUL TO THE DEVIL, AND I WANT TO BUY A PIECE OF IT BACK... BUT FROM WHOM?
DESPITE HIS BEST INTENT, LONDON WILL NOT FOLLOW ROBERT PEEL ALONE. MY CHURCH CARES NOT FOR AFFAIRS OF THE FLESH, ONLY FOR THE KINGDOM THAT WAITS...
...SO WHY PUT MY FAITH IN ONE MORE MISSHAPEN CLOD WITHOUT DAMN GOOD REASON?
YOU HAVE SOMETHING ABSINTHE DESPERATELY WANTS, ELSE YOU WOULD BE DEAD. SOMETHING HE CONSIDERS VALUABLE. DANGEROUS. THAT LEAVES ME TWO CHOICES.
FREE YOU, SACRIFICE MY CAREER, MY LIFE, EVERYTHING, IN THE HOPES THAT YOU WILL USE THIS EDGE TO TOPPLE ABSINTHE...
...OR ENSURE THAT THE KNOWLEDGE HE SEEKS DIES WITH YOU.

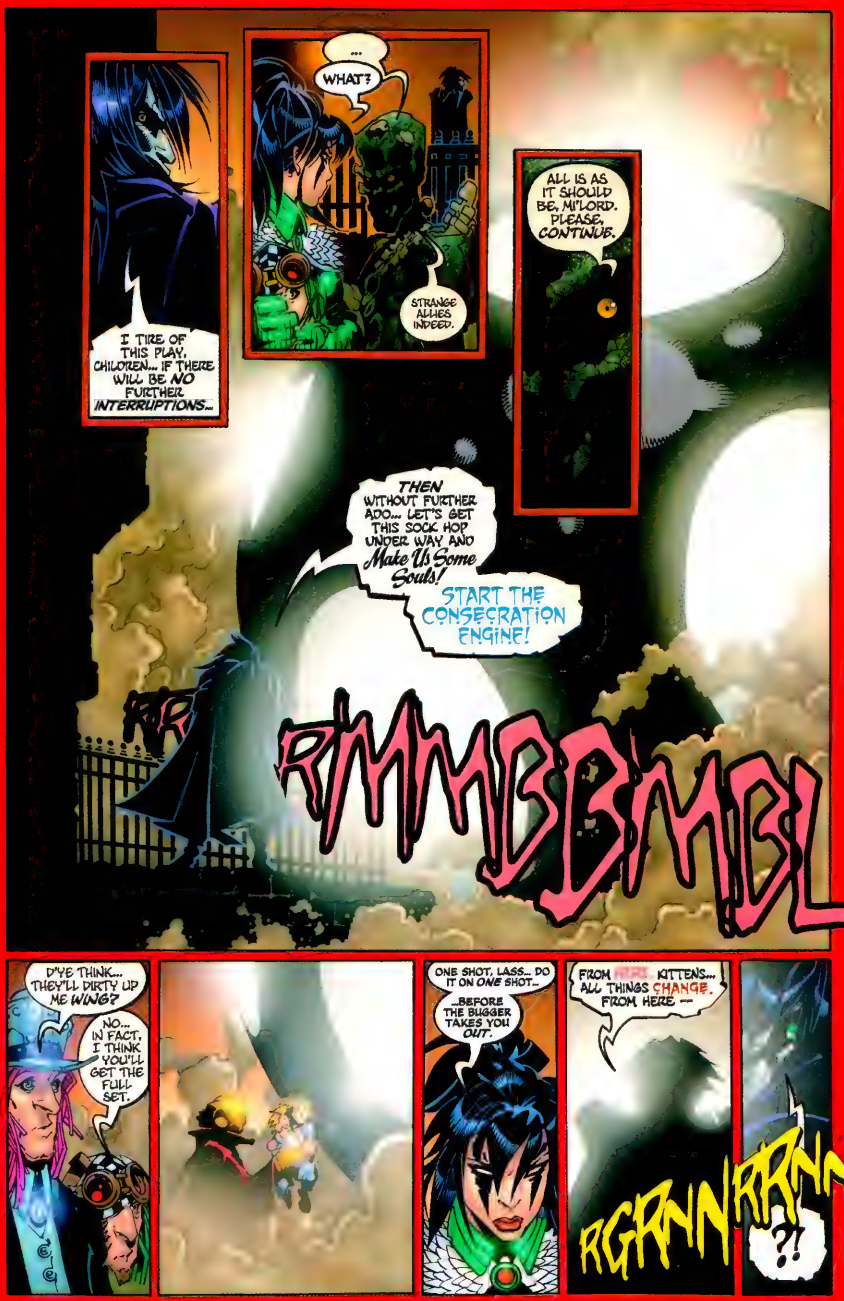
SO WHAT IS IT, BLAQUESMITH?
WHAT MAKES YOU SO SPECIAL THAT THE KING OF HALF THE WORLD STOPS TO TAKE NOTICE?
...
GOD SAVE ME... I CANNOT REMEMBER...
...AND TO END THIS NIGHTMARE... I WOULD NOT REMEMBER... EVER...
...
I AM TRULY SORRY, SIR...
...THAT YOU HAVE PROVEN TO BE SUCH A DISAPPOINTMENT.
CRREEAK
GNT
GNNT
GRONNNNNK
ROWNNNNK
GASP
!?!
HONNK

I DIDN'T KNOW... LONDON COULD LOOK LIKE THIS.
DRINK Mocca-Cola FROM A BOTTLE
RECORDS & SHEET MUSIC
PLATTERPUSS
PYE · DECCA · RCA
ELECTRONICS
BINGO
Bots
EAGLE
611MP
HONNY HONK

WE CHANGED THE WORLD.
GNRT!
KRANGT
WAIT.
?!
METHINKS THAT MY DEATH, SIR, SHALL HAVE TO WAIT...
...THERE IS A PROBLEM HERE NEEDS FIXING.
AND HERE WE OFFER UNTO THEE, OH LORD, OUR SELVES, OUR BODIES, AND OUR SOULS TO BE A REASONABLE, HOLY, AND LIVING SACRIFICE.
TODAY... I AM PETER. AND UPON THIS ROCK, I HAVE BUILT MY CHURCH. THE GATES OF HELL CANNOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT -- NOR WILL THE GATES OF HEAVEN...
S'TRUE, HOLINESS? WE ARE GOING TO HEAVEN?
YES, CHILD. AFTER OUR GOOD WORK TODAY... WE ALL ARE.
BUT THE LORD HAS TOLD ME HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOU FIRST.
DO YOU FANCY THAT THE EXTRACTION IS... PAINFUL?
TERRIBLE. TERRIBLE.
I DO SO WISH THEY WOULD BEGIN...
WHAT'RE YOU LOT WAITING FOR, THE SECOND COMING?! GET ON WITH IT!

YOUR CIVILIZED NATIVES ARE RESTLESS.
CALL IT A STATE OF repressed arousal, MISS HISS.
WHICH MEANS... IT'S TIME TO BEGIN--
LORD ABSINTHE!
IF IT PLEASES YOUR HIGHNESS, WE ARE ARRIVED BEARING AN OFFERING.
WE HAVE PLUCKED THE HEART OF SEDITION FROM LONDON. WE GIVE YOU, SIR ROBERT PEEL AND HIS INNER CIRCLE OF CONSPIRATORS!
PEEL? HOSHTOSH!
B-BUT... 'E'S AN ARISTOCRAT. WHY HIM--?
Sigh... BUT A MOMENT, GOD... POLITICS.
'E AIN'T ONE OF US. 'E AIN'T UNDER-DWELLER--
HE IS NOW.
THERE BE A RESISTANCE? TO WHAT?
TREAD LIGHTLY, LORD.
I SEE TROUBLES HERE.
THAT'S FUNNY...
...I SEE APPETIZERS!


LEADER OF THE "RESISTANCE..." HMMF.
I TRUST YOU'LL NOT TAKE OFFENSE THAT I'M DISAPPOINTED. I THOUGHT YOU'D BE Taller.
JUST AS I TRUST, YOUR HIGHNESS... THAT YOU'LL NOT TAKE OFFENSE WHEN MY COMRADES BURN YOUR EMPIRE TO THE GROUND.
FUNNY. YOU SHOULD PLAY VEGAS, CAT.
STAND SATISFIED, VICTORIA. YOUR CHOICE WAS WISE. THESE TIMES MAKE FOR STRANGE ALLIES. THOSE WHO DO NOT BEND, BREAK.
INDEED, FAUST.
INDEED.
YOU KNOW I KNEW... YES? I KNEW YOUR EVERY TREACHERY AND I LET YOU SQUIRM IN THE FILTH, BECAUSE IT AMUSED ME.
YOUR LIFE... HAS BEEN MY Entertainment.
IF YOU HAD ANY INKLING OF HOW I -- WE HAVE SPENT OUR TIME... YOU WOULD HAVE MURDERED US ALL MONTHS AGO.
KILLING ME NOW IS KILLING ME TOO LATE.
THE SEEDS OF FREEDOM HAVE BEEN PLANTED, AND THEY SHALL BLOSSOM FIRE--
OH DO SHUT UP.
KRAK
DON'T YOU TOUCH HIM YE ROCKSLOB!
PERFECT. KEEP YELLING...
TAKE.
WHA--? I --
YOU WERE CLOSEST. CONGRATULATIONS.
RANDY!
SLAD

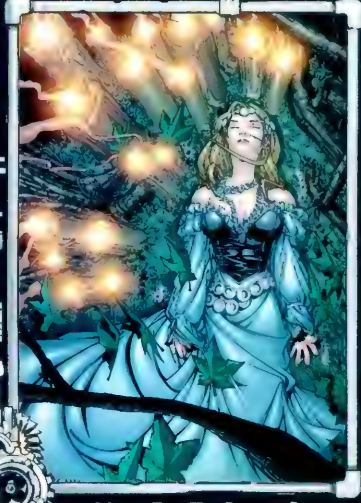

I TIRE OF THIS PLAY, CHILDREN... IF THERE WILL BE NO FURTHER INTERRUPTIONS...
...
WHAT?
STRANGE ALLIES, INDEED.
ALL IS AS IT SHOULD BE, MI'LORD. PLEASE, CONTINUE.
THEN WITHOUT FURTHER ADO... LET'S GET THIS SOCK HOP UNDER WAY AND Make Us Some Souls!
START THE CONSECRATION ENGINE!
RRMMBBMBL
D'YE THINK... THEY'LL DIRTY UP ME WINGS?
NO... IN FACT, I THINK YOU'LL GET THE FULL SET.
ONE SHOT, LASS... DO IT ON ONE SHOT...
...BEFORE THE BUGGER TAKES YOU OUT.
FROM RRRI KITTENS... ALL THINGS CHANGE. FROM HERE --
RGRNNRRNNR
?!

GRNRGNNT
KRRMMB!
BEGINNING'S
NEXT
END
COLE VS
ABSINTHE
IT'S REVOLUTION, BABY!

Cover Gallery

Chris Bachalo, Richard Friend, and Bad @ss

Joe Madureira, Sandra Hope, and Bad @ss



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SPINELESS BLACKGUARDS... SAVAGES.
THIS -- THIS IS NOT RIGHT. THIS IS NOT HOW DECENT PEOPLE COMPOSE THEMSELVES --
'TIS HERR, MISS FIONA.
PRIMAL REALM
WHY?! BECAUSE I OPT OUT OF THEIR PARLOR GAMES AND PETTY POLITICS TO TEACH THEIR CHILDREN?
BECAUSE I SPEAK MY MIND, THEY WOULD BURN DOWN A SCHOOL?!
NOTHING OF THE SORT, MISS.
A POOR HOOLIGAN GOT TAUGHT HOW TO READ. HOW TO THINK FOR HIMSELF.
TWAS NOT TO THEIR LIKING.
NO, COLE. THIS IS NOT YOUR QUARREL. THIS IS THE WORK OF SMALL-MINDED MEN --
I HAVE BEEN MANY THINGS IN MY LIFE, MISS... PUPPET. SLAVE. COWARD.
NO MORE. NEVER AGAIN.
YOU TAUGHT ME... ONCE ONE'S EYES ARE OPENED TO TRUTH, THEY CANNOT BE CLOSED.
I WILL MAKE THIS RIGHT FOR YOU...

CONTRITION

A CHRIS BACHALO + JOE KELLY PRODUCTION

I WILL MAKE IT ALL RIGHT... FOR US.
HEAVEN HELP THE MOTHERLESS BASTARD WHO SAYS DIFFERENT.
THERE WAS A TIME, AS A CHILD WHEN THUNDER FRIGHTENED ME. THUNDER... IMAGINE.

LAST ISSUE

Given the option of resistance or death by rebellion operative Nixon, COLE BLAQUESMITH chooses life when significant memories return to him. Armed with a renewed conviction and hatred for the scheming LORD ABSINTHE, Cole attacks Absinthe at the unveiling of the death-dealing Consecration Engine, threatening the monarch's tenuous deal with the IRON MONK.

BEING A CONTINUATION OF THE SAGA OF COLE BLAQUESMITH

Inked by Sir RICHARD FRIEND
Colored by RAD@$$ & Sir JAMES ROCHELLE
Lettered by Sir Richard Starkings & Comicraft's Lady SAIDA!
Edited by Sir SCOTT DUNBIER
Assisted by Sir JOHN LAYMAN

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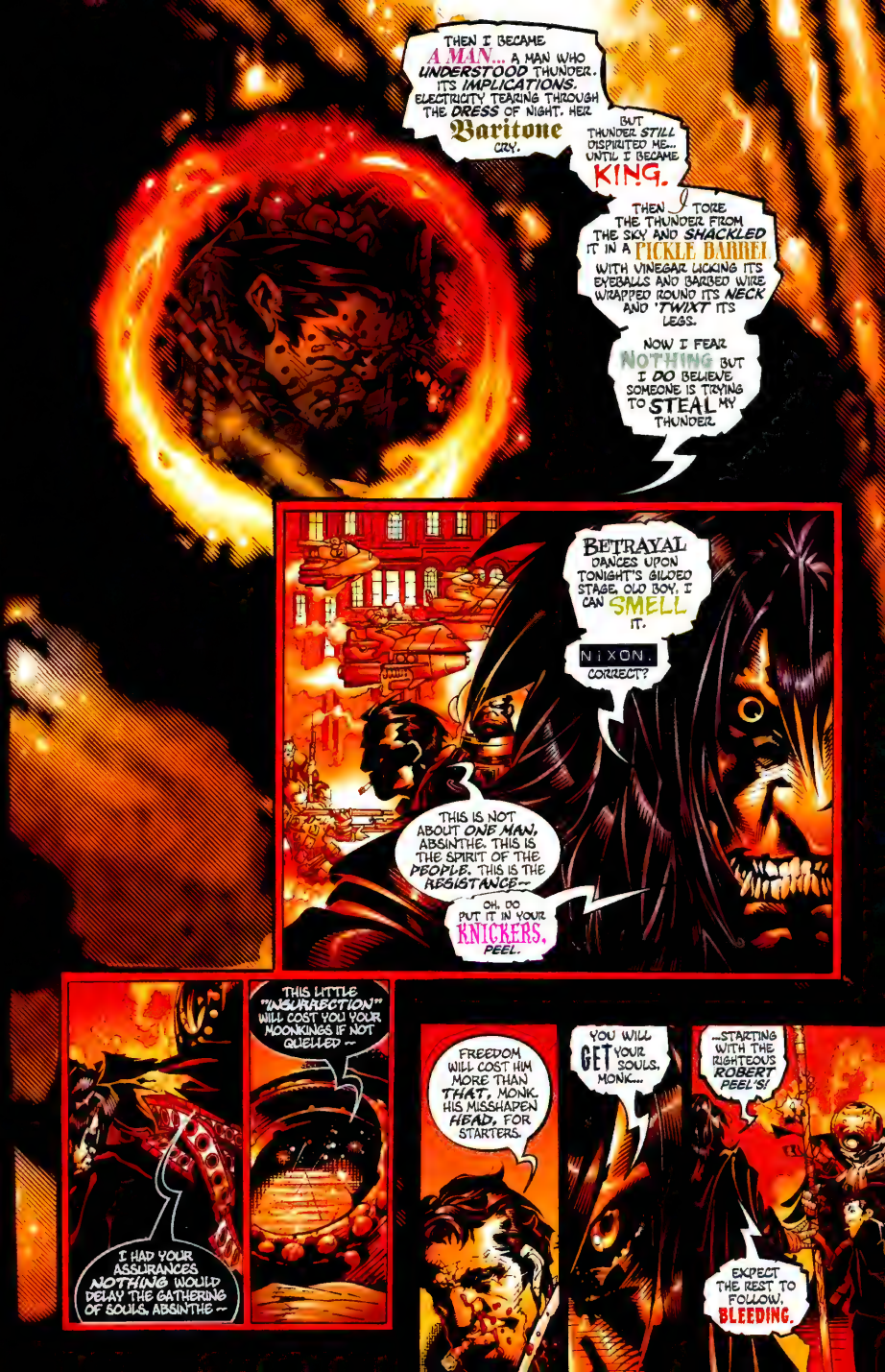

THEN I BECAME A MAN... A MAN WHO UNDERSTOOD THUNDER. ITS IMPLICATIONS. ELECTRICITY TEARING THROUGH THE DRESS OF NIGHT. HER Baritone CRY.
BUT THUNDER STILL DISPIRITED ME... UNTIL I BECAME KING.
THEN I TORE THE THUNDER FROM THE SKY AND SHACKLED IT IN A PICKLE BARREL WITH VINEGAR LICKING ITS EYEBALLS AND BARBED WIRE WRAPPED ROUND ITS NECK AND 'TWIXT ITS LEGS.
NOW I FEAR NOTHING BUT I DO BELIEVE SOMEONE IS TRYING TO STEAL MY THUNDER.
BETRAYAL DANCES UPON TONIGHT'S GILDED STAGE, OLD BOY. I CAN SMELL IT.
NIXON, CORRECT?
THIS IS NOT ABOUT ONE MAN, ABSINTHE. THIS IS THE SPIRIT OF THE PEOPLE. THIS IS THE RESISTANCE--
OH. DO PUT IT IN YOUR KNICKERS, PEEL.
I HAD YOUR ASSURANCES NOTHING WOULD DELAY THE GATHERING OF SOULS, ABSINTHE --
THIS LITTLE "INSURRECTION" WILL COST YOU YOUR MOONKINGS IF NOT QUELLED --
FREEDOM WILL COST HIM MORE THAN THAT, MONK. HIS MISSHAPEN HEAD, FOR STARTERS.
YOU WILL GET YOUR SOULS, MONK...
...STARTING WITH THE RIGHTEOUS ROBERT PEEL'S!
EXPECT THE REST TO FOLLOW, BLEEDING.

BLAQUESMITH... LOOK AT 'IM. LOOK AT 'IM FIGHT.
T'WOULDN'T BELIEVE IT IF WE'D SOMEONE ELSE'S EYES...
?
VICTORIA... THE STORM IS UPON US. NOW. THOUGH YOU HAVE FOUND SHELTER IN ODD PORTS BEFORE...
I FORGIVE AND ACCEPT YOU. WILL YOU SHARE A PLACE WITH ME AT MY LORD'S HEARTH?
F-FAUST... I --
STAY TO YOUR SIDE OF THE BATTLE FIELD, LITTLE DRAGON, AND PRAY THAT BY THE TIME I SLAY BLAQUESMITH--
YOU HAVE MADE YOUR MIND CLEAR.
KEEP AT 'EM, BOY! KILL 'EM ALL!
WHO'S WINNING, RANDY! I WANT TO CHEER FR THE RIGHT SIDE.
YER A CREDIT T' THE RESISTANCE, SKÖM, REALLY --
OI!
KRASH
WHO WAS THAT? SHOULD I CRY "YAY" OR "BOO?"
IF YOU DON' SHUT UP, I'M OF A MIND NOT TO LET YOU HELP ME SAVE LONDON. COME ON.
MUSKET STILL WORKS. LOOK F'R BULLETS --
FOUND BETTER. 'E 'AD A BRASS BYE. TEN CROWN AT LEAST.
¡VIVA LA RESISTANCE!
GUN. CAT WITH THE GAT IS THE MAN WITH A PLAN. RIGHT. YEAH.
DON'T MESS THIS UP, KID... DO RIGHT FOR RIKK. DO RIGHT.
-Sigh- KEEP IT. HAZARD PAY. LET'S TRY TO HELP PEEL.

SOON.
THOOM
CRUNCH
BOOMF
WE WILL HAVE VENGEANCE --
SHHFFF
BLAQUESMITH... EN GARDE.
HNNGH?!
CRUNK
FSSSH!
KRUNCH

HOUFF!
I TRUST THAT THIS TIME, YOU'RE STOKED WITH ENOUGH FUEL TO KEEP THIS... INTERESTING.
AYE, DEMON. AYE.
LET'S AT IT, THEN. I'VE NOT ALL DAY TO KILL YOUR MASTER.
BOYS, BOYS! ALL THIS FOR Moi AND NOT EVEN MY Birthday? YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE.
LORD?
NEVER LET IT BE SAID THAT I LEFT AFFAIRS OF STATE TO UNDERLINGS AND Half-breeds, FAUST.
FISHERMAN... I CALL YOUR BLUFF. LET'S GET NASTY.

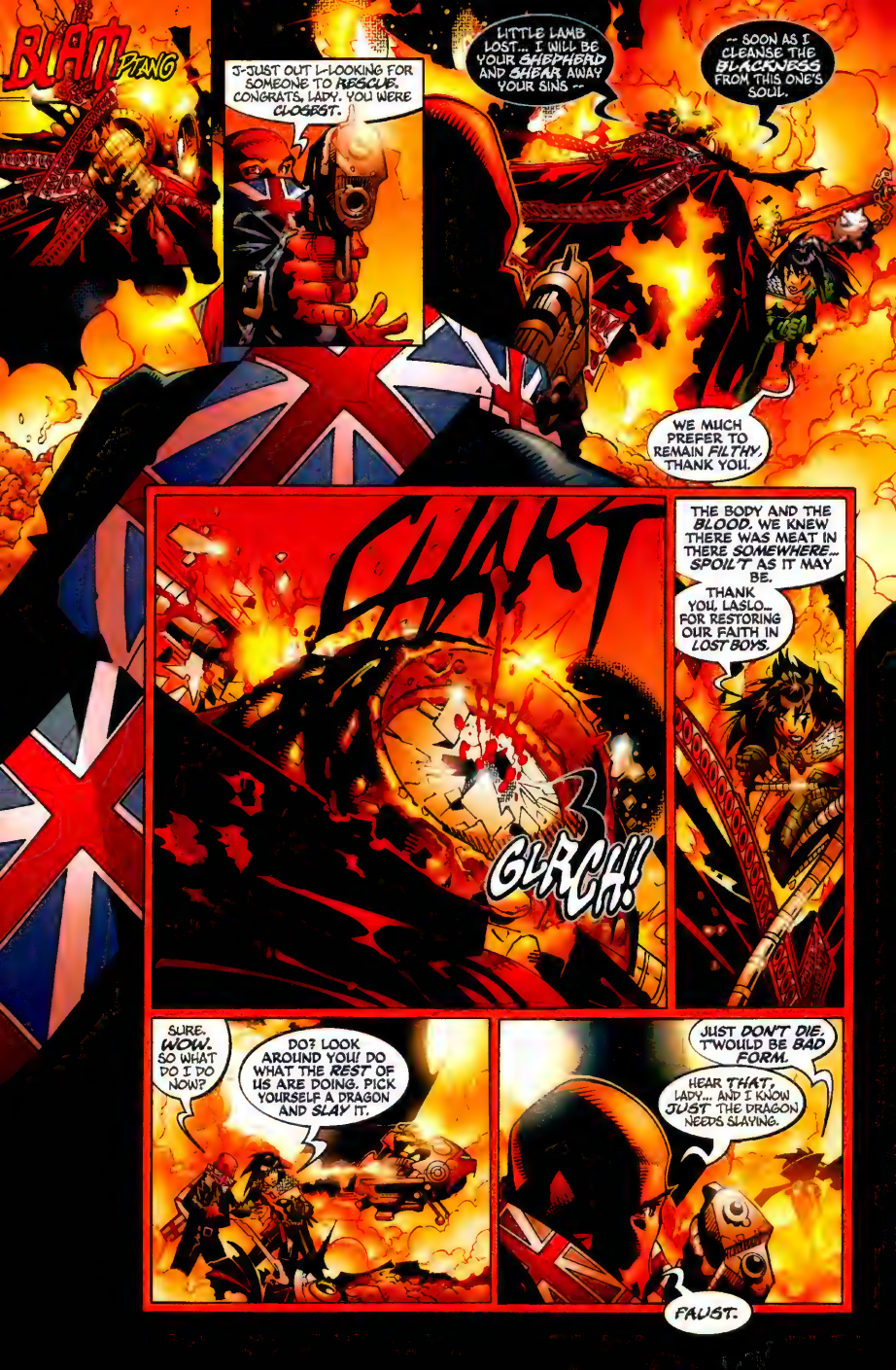
CHAOS. THE WORLD OF MAN IS BUT CHAOS. IS IT ANY WONDER WE CARE TO LEAVE IT?
AFTER YOUR SOUL IS PLUCKED FROM YOUR SKULL, ONLY TWO OR THREE MILLION MORE SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO GRANT US PASSAGE. AMEN.
GHOOM GHOOM GHOOM GHOOM GHOOM
YOU ARE A BLASPHEMY TO THE GOOD NAME OF OUR LORD, MONK. MAY HE HAVE MERCY ON YOUR SOUL.
NO. IT IS OUR OPINION THAT THE MONK IS BEYOND MERCY --
IN THIS WORLD, OR THE NEXT.
I WOULDN'T --
BLAM BLAM BLAM
BLAM
AMEN, SISTER.
THUMP

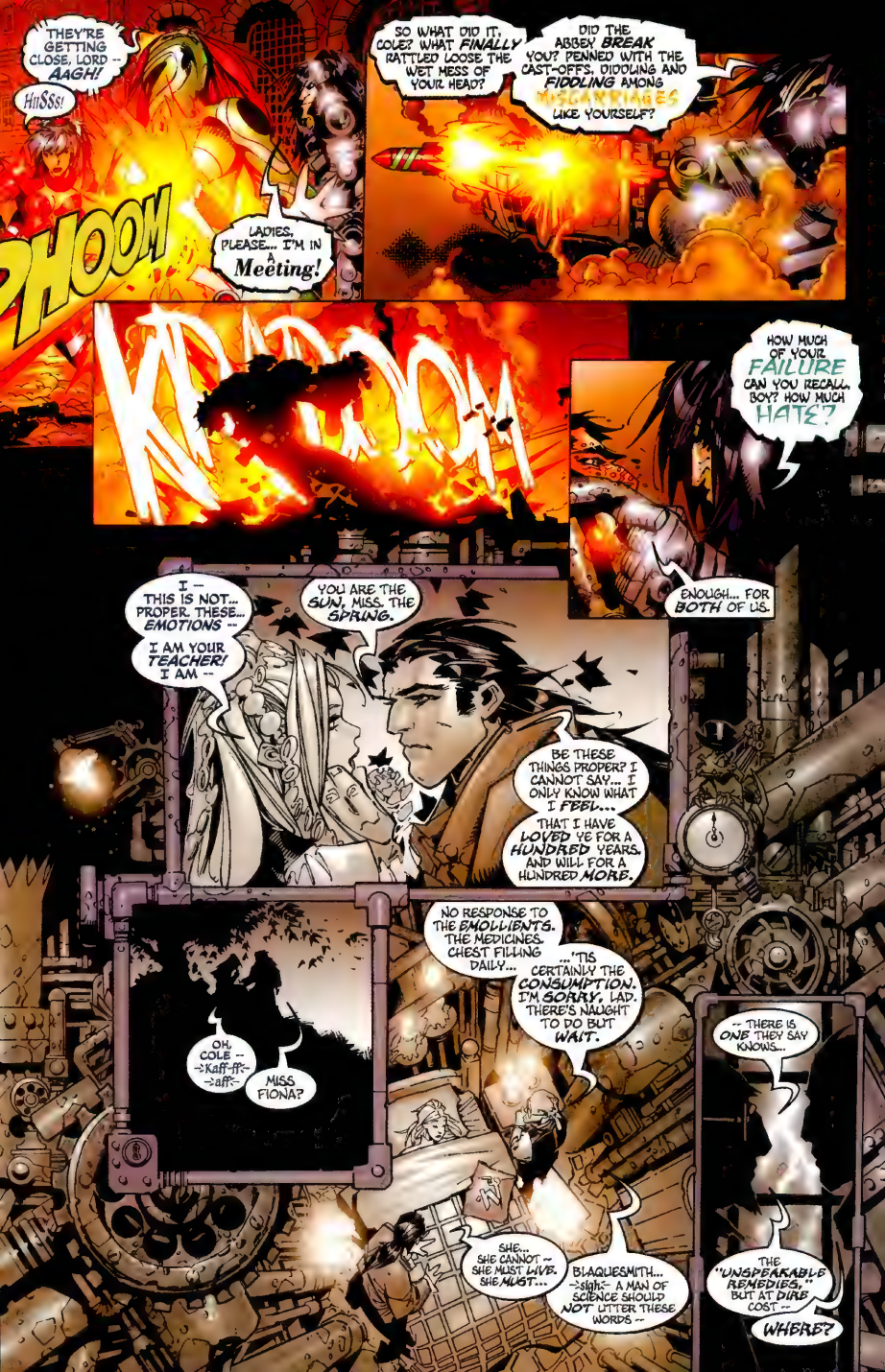
WAS IT YOUR PLAN ALL ALONG TO DOUBLE CROSS ME AND TRIPLE CROSS ABSINTHE -- OR IS THIS A "WOMAN'S PREROGATIVE?"
WE SHALL OFFER AN ANSWER WHEN WE KNOW OURSELVES.
YOU TWO. PEEL'S OVER HERE. HE REQUIRES ESCORT.
UH... VIVA ABSINTHE?
THE LADY IS WITH US, MAN. QUICKLY, TO THE TUNNELS.
GOD PROTECT AND KEEP THEE, BOB PEEL --
GOD... CANNOT HEAR YOU, SINNER...
PERHAPS... IF YOU SCREAM.
LORD -- SURELY THIS TASK IS NOT MEANT FOR YOUR HANDS! I --
THESE HANDS HAVE DONE FAR WORSE THAN CRACK A PEASANT'S NECK, FAUST! BESIDES, YOU HAVE ANOTHER JOB --
-- FIND ME THE TRAITOR, NIXON. BRING HIM TO ME WITH HIS MARBS STUFFED IN HIS MOUTH.
I -- I HAVE HAD A VISION! GOD WAR ON EARTH.
THE MAN OF METAL THRASHED AGAINST THE LONE WANDERER! DESTINY AND THUNDER--
YOUR "DESTINY" SLAVE, IS TO LEAP WHEN I SAY "LEAP", KILL WHEN I SAY "KILL", AND DIE WHEN I SAY "DIE". IF YOU WOULD HAVE ME GIVE THAT COMMAND NOW... KEEP TALKING.
BY WORD OF MY LORD, ONLY, I LEAVE... BUT KNOW THIS...
DESTINY WILL HAVE HER DRAMA PLAYED OUT IN STEEL AND --
yip yip yip. GET OUT OF HERE, YOU BONY SCAMP.

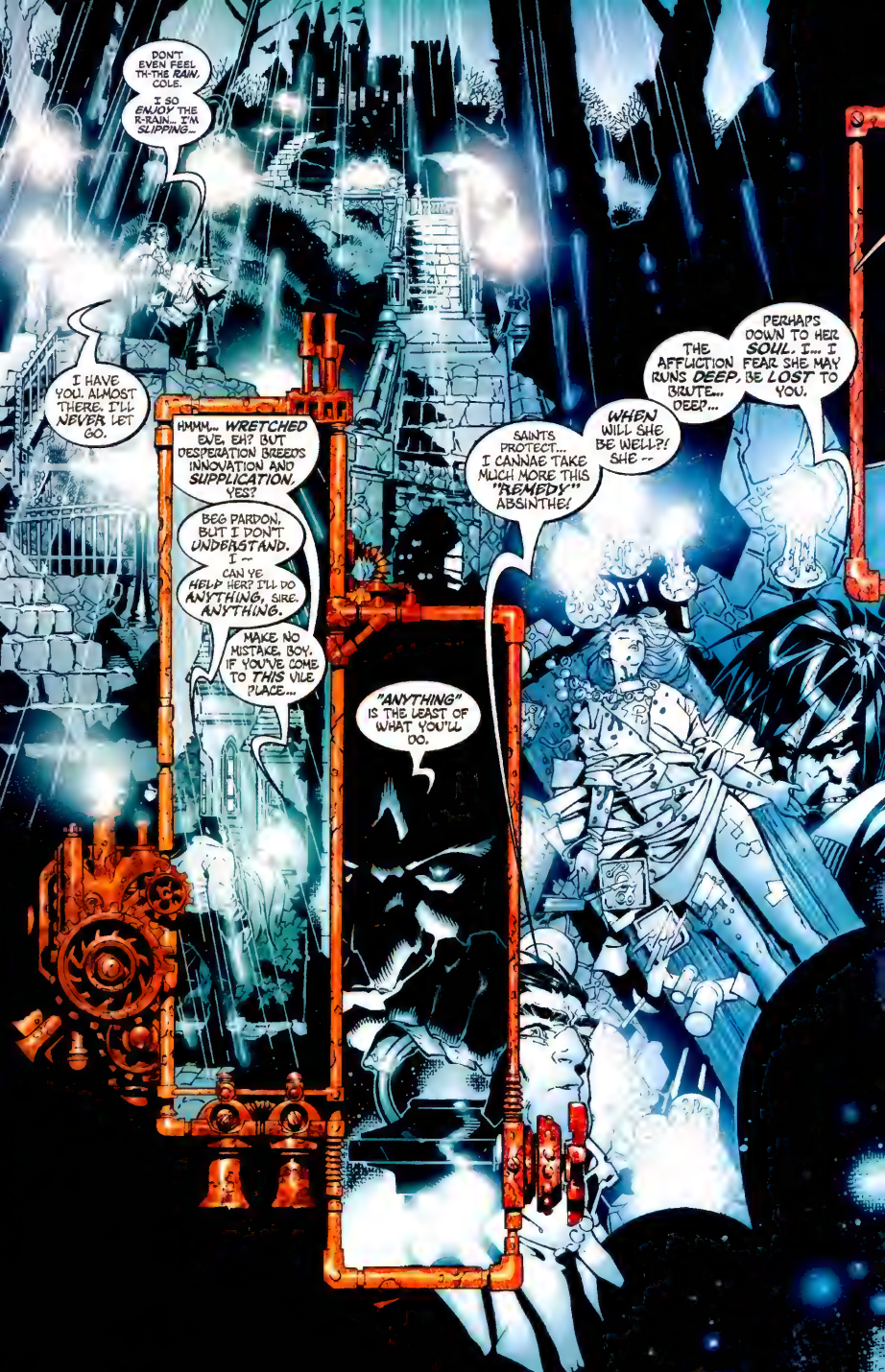
SOMETHING TO SAY TO ME, COLE? A RIGHTEOUS SOLILOQUY OF LOST LOVE AND ANCIENT HURTS? A WHIMPER OR A GROWL OR SOMETHING OUT OF Shakespeare PERHAPS?
IT'S YOUR Big Solo!
THE DOG SOLDIERS ARE SIMPLY DYING TO HEAR IT--- ENTERTAINMENT IS SO Difficult TO COME BY.
I'LL WASTE NO WORDS ON YOU, ABSINTHE... BUT YOUR MEN WILL DIE JUST THE SAME...
...BECAUSE THIS IS NOT A SOLO.
NIXON!
GOD...TAKE PITY ON AN OLD SOT... AND LET THIS BE THE RIGHT THING.
CHILDREN OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY!
FREEDOM IS YOURS. IF YOU'LL HAVE IT. RISE AGAINST YOUR JAILER.
HONOR YOUR FATHER. HONOR YOURSELVES.
TAKE BACK YOUR LIVES! TAKE BACK LONDON!

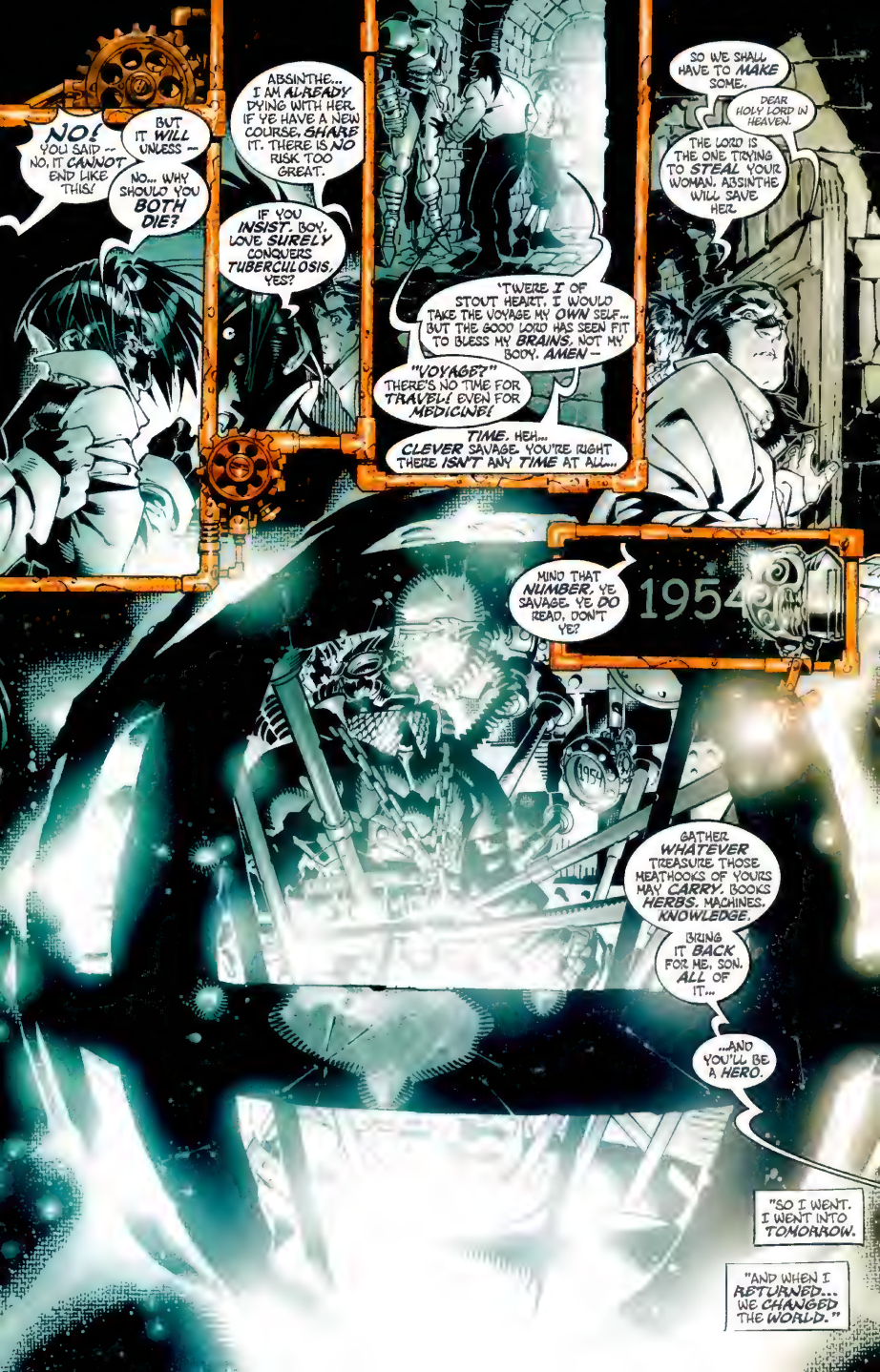
IS THIS PART OF THE PROGRAMME?
I... I DO NOT BELIEVE, DEAREST... THIS IS FOR PLAY.
DOES THAT MEAN TEA WILL BE PUT OFF?
KTHOOM
BOOM
THAM
KTHAMM
ANARCHY. GOODIE. YOU NEVER CEASE TO IMPRESS, YOU CLEVER CLEVER BEASTIE. YOU FOUND YOURSELF AN ARMY.
NO, DOG. THEY FOUND ME...
I FOUND ONLY MY HATE... AND A WAY TO MAKE YOU HURT.

YOU DAMN US ALL TO AN ETERNITY UPON THIS WRETCHED EARTH!
T'WOULD NOT BE SO, IF NOT FOR SELFISH MEN AND MOUNTEBANKS LIKE YOURSELF!
LAY THEE DOWN AND DIE, WHORE OF SATAN!
INCIDENTALLY, YOUR "HOLINESS"--
CHANK
DO NOT REFER TO US AS "WHORE". EVER.
YEEARGH!!
PERHAPS THEN, "JEZEBEL" IS MORE TO THY LIKING?
THACK!
THEN SHARE THE FATE PROPHESIZED FOR HER BY EZEKIEL!
AS I CLEANSE THIS LAND AND BARTER ITS SOULS FOR MY PLACE IN HEAVEN --
-- YOUR HERETICAL CORPSE SHALL FESTER IN THE GULLETS OF DOGS!

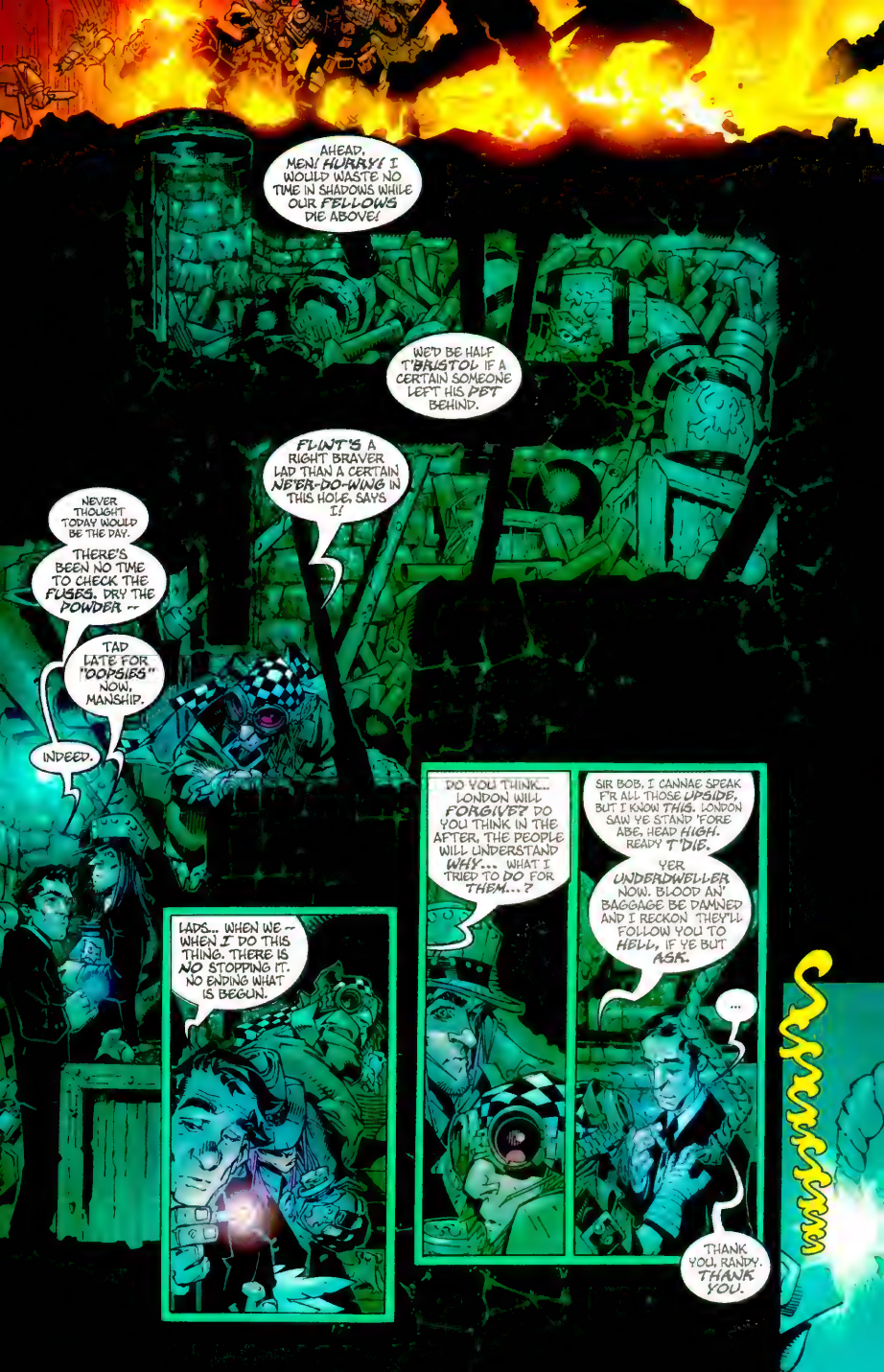

BLAM! PIANO
J-JUST OUT L-LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO RESCUE. CONGRATS, LADY. YOU WERE CLOSEST.
LITTLE LAMB LOST... I WILL BE YOUR SHEPHERD AND SHEAR AWAY YOUR SINS --
-- SOON AS I CLEANSE THE BLACKNESS FROM THIS ONE'S SOUL.
WE MUCH PREFER TO REMAIN FILTHY, THANK YOU.
CHAK!
GLRCH!
THE BODY AND THE BLOOD. WE KNEW THERE WAS MEAT IN THERE SOMEWHERE... SPOILT AS IT MAY BE.
THANK YOU, LASLO... FOR RESTORING OUR FAITH IN LOST BOYS.
SURE. WOW. SO WHAT DO I DO NOW?
DO? LOOK AROUND YOU! DO WHAT THE REST OF US ARE DOING. PICK YOURSELF A DRAGON AND SLAY IT.
JUST DON'T DIE. TWOULD BE BAD FORM.
HEAR THAT, LADY... AND I KNOW JUST THE DRAGON NEEDS SLAYING.
FAUST.


THEY'RE GETTING CLOSE, LORD -- AAGH!
HISSSS!
PHOOM
LADIES, PLEASE... I'M IN A Meeting!
SO WHAT DID IT, COLE? WHAT FINALLY RATTLED LOOSE THE WET MESS OF YOUR HEAD?
DID THE ABBEY BREAK YOU? PENNED WITH THE CAST-OFFS, DIDDLING AND FIDDLING AMONG MISCARRIAGES LIKE YOURSELF?
KRAKOOM
HOW MUCH OF YOUR FAILURE CAN YOU RECALL, BOY? HOW MUCH HATE?
ENOUGH... FOR BOTH OF US.
I -- THIS IS NOT... PROPER. THESE... EMOTIONS -- I AM YOUR TEACHER! I AM --
YOU ARE THE GUN, MISS. THE SPRING.
BE THESE THINGS PROPER? I CANNOT SAY... I ONLY KNOW WHAT I FEEL...
THAT I HAVE LOVED YE FOR A HUNDRED YEARS. AND WILL FOR A HUNDRED MORE.
OH, COLE -- -Kaff-ff- -aff-
MISS FIONA?
NO RESPONSE TO THE EMOLLIENTS. THE MEDICINES. CHEST FILLING DAILY...
...'TIS CERTAINLY THE CONSUMPTION. I'M SORRY, LAD. THERE'S NAUGHT TO DO BUT WAIT.
-- THERE IS ONE THEY SAY KNOWS...
THE "UNSPEAKABLE REMEDIES," BUT AT DIRE COST --
WHERE?
SHE... SHE CANNOT -- SHE MUST LIVE. SHE MUST...
BLAQUESMITH... -sigh- A MAN OF SCIENCE SHOULD NOT UTTER THESE WORDS --


DON'T EVEN FEEL TH-THE RAIN, COLE.
I SO ENJOY THE R-RAIN... I'M SLIPPING...
I HAVE YOU. ALMOST THERE. I'LL NEVER LET GO.
HMMM... WRETCHED EVE, EH? BUT DESPERATION BREEDS INNOVATION AND SUPPLICATION. YES?
BEG PARDON, BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND. I --
CAN YE HELP HER? I'LL DO ANYTHING, SIRE. ANYTHING.
MAKE NO MISTAKE, BOY. IF YOU'VE COME TO THIS VILE PLACE...
"ANYTHING" IS THE LEAST OF WHAT YOU'LL DO.
SAINTS PROTECT... I CANNAE TAKE MUCH MORE THIS "REMEDY" ABSINTHE!
WHEN WILL SHE BE WELL?! SHE --
THE AFFLICTION RUNS DEEP, BRUTE... DEEP...
PERHAPS DOWN TO HER SOUL. I... I FEAR SHE MAY BE LOST TO YOU.


NO! YOU SAID -- NO, IT CANNOT END LIKE THIS!
BUT IT WILL UNLESS --
NO... WHY SHOULD YOU BOTH DIE?
ABSINTHE... I AM ALREADY DYING WITH HER. IF YE HAVE A NEW COURSE, SHARE IT. THERE IS NO RISK TOO GREAT.
IF YOU INSIST. BOY, LOVE SURELY CONQUERS TUBERCULOSIS, YES?
'TWERE I OF STOUT HEART, I WOULD TAKE THE VOYAGE MY OWN SELF... BUT THE GOOD LORD HAS SEEN FIT TO BLESS MY BRAINS, NOT MY BODY. AMEN --
"VOYAGE?" THERE'S NO TIME FOR TRAVEL! EVEN FOR MEDICINE!
TIME. HEH... CLEVER SAVAGE. YOU'RE RIGHT THERE ISN'T ANY TIME AT ALL...
SO WE SHALL HAVE TO MAKE SOME.
DEAR HOLY LORD IN HEAVEN.
THE LORD IS THE ONE TRYING TO STEAL YOUR WOMAN. ABSINTHE WILL SAVE HER.
MIND THAT NUMBER, YE SAVAGE. YE DO READ, DON'T YE?
1954
GATHER WHATEVER TREASURE THOSE MEATHOOKS OF YOURS MAY CARRY. BOOKS. HERBS. MACHINES. KNOWLEDGE.
BRING IT BACK FOR ME, SON. ALL OF IT...
...AND YOU'LL BE A HERO.
"SO I WENT. I WENT INTO TOMORROW.
"AND WHEN I RETURNED... WE CHANGED THE WORLD."

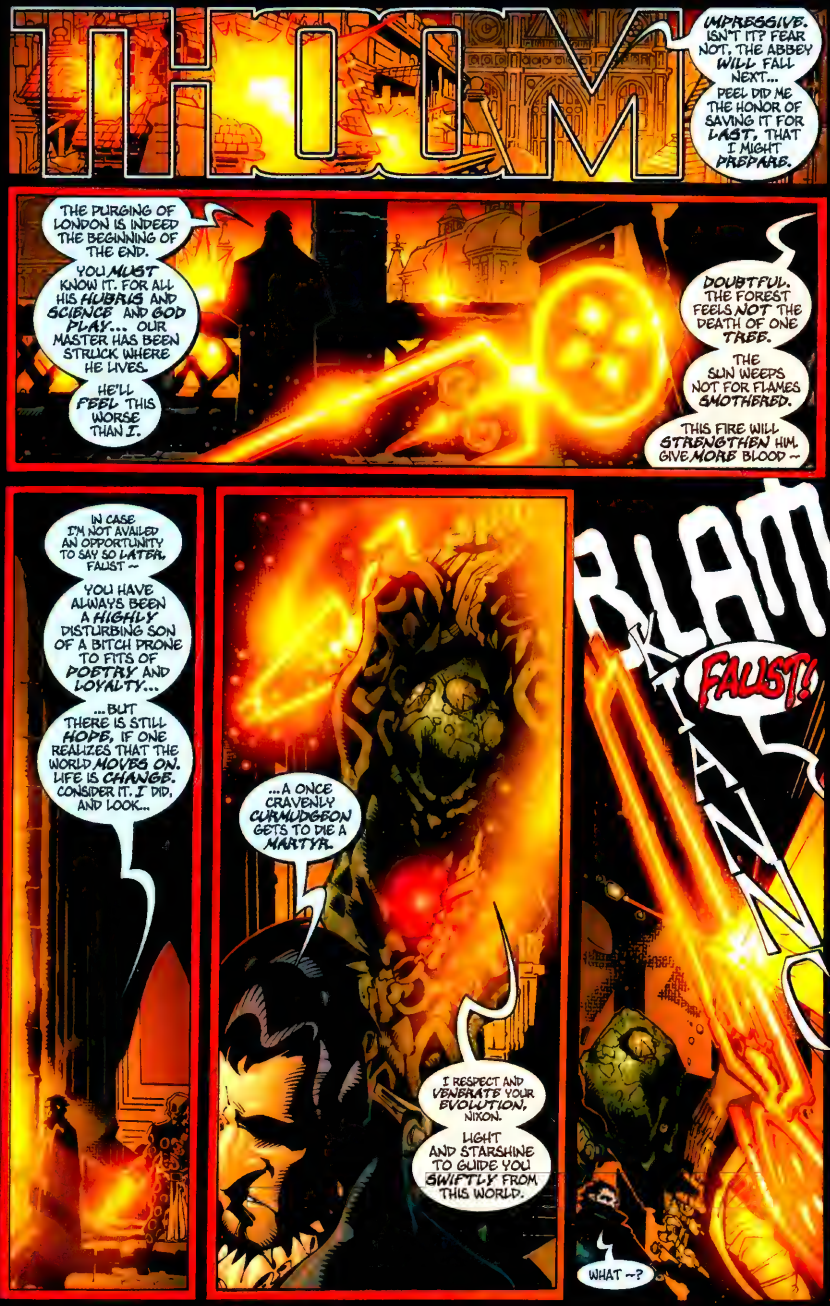
WE CHANGED THE WORLD!
THAM
SO... IT'S NOT ALL TRIPE AND FISH GUTS THERE, IS IT? WONDERFUL...
...AS THEY SAY, KNOWLEDGE IS POWER
I CARE NOT FOR POWER. ONLY VENGEANCE AND RETRIBUTION!
VENGEANCE... HA!
KTINK
THANKS TO YOU, I GAINED THE WHEREWITHAL TO EVISCERATE EVERYONE WHO EVER DID ME WRONG--
-- AND ENSLAVE THOSE WHO MIGHT DARE THINK TO. AFTER A FEW DECADES OF WREAKING VENGEANCE, IT'S ALL DULLSVILLE.
BUT POWER... POWER IS Hot Sex on a Stick.
THOR


AHEAD, MEN! HURRY! I WOULD WASTE NO TIME IN SHADOWS WHILE OUR FELLOWS DIE ABOVE!
WE'D BE HALF T'BRISTOL IF A CERTAIN SOMEONE LEFT HIS PET BEHIND.
FLINT'S A RIGHT BRAVER LAD THAN A CERTAIN NE'ER-DO-WING IN THIS HOLE, SAYS I!
NEVER THOUGHT TODAY WOULD BE THE DAY.
THERE'S BEEN NO TIME TO CHECK THE FUSES. DRY THE POWDER --
TAD LATE FOR "OOPSIES" NOW, MANSHIP.
INDEED.
LADS... WHEN WE -- WHEN I DO THIS THING. THERE IS NO STOPPING IT. NO ENDING WHAT IS BEGUN.
DO YOU THINK... LONDON WILL FORGIVE? DO YOU THINK IN THE AFTER, THE PEOPLE WILL UNDERSTAND WHY... WHAT I TRIED TO DO FOR THEM...?
SIR BOB, I CANNAE SPEAK FR ALL THOSE UPSIDE, BUT I KNOW THIS. LONDON SAW YE STAND 'FORE ABE, HEAD HIGH. READY T'DIE.
YER UNDERDWELLER NOW. BLOOD AN' BAGGAGE BE DAMNED AND I RECKON THEY'LL FOLLOW YOU TO HELL, IF YE BUT ASK.
...
THANK YOU, RANDY. THANK YOU.

THAT APPEARS AS IF IT MIGHT HAVE STUNG.
YAY ME.
YOU WERE MY PUPPET A CENTURY AGO, COLE. NOW, ONLY HALF A FISHERMAN WITH NO HEART AND LESS BRAINS, YOU ARE EVEN MORE SO MY PLAY-PRETTY.
WHAT MISFIRING DELUDED YOU INTO THINKING YOU COULD TAKE ME IN THE WORLD I SPAWNED?

A LITTLE THING...
THERE IS -:Kaff:- NOTHING... NOTHING, COLE... -:Kaff:- MORE POWERFUL ON THIS EARTH... ...THAN THE WILL OF A TRUE AND HONEST MAN. NOTHING... NOTHING... -:Kaff Kaff:-
FIONA...
ONE WOMAN'S DREAM. YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND.
A BOATLOAD OF HAPPY DOLLS IT WON HER, EH? TALK NOT OF DREAMS, PUPPET. TALK TO ME OF YOUR RETURNED MEMORY, OF THE PRIZE I'VE SOUGHT FOR ONE HUNDRED YEARS.
WHERE DID YOU HIDE MY ENGINE?
SIRE--!
NO!
THAT'LL TEACH ME TO BE IRONIC. NEXT TIME I ENCOUNTER A PUBESCENT MATRIARCH--
-- I'LL BE SURE TO STRANGLE HER IMMEDIATELY.
GOODBYE AND GOOD RIDDANCE YOU LITTLE SLUT.

THE SEEDS OF FREEDOM SHALL BLOSSOM FIRE.
CHOKE ON IT YOU BASTARDLY GIT.
Y'KNOW... WE COULD'VE MADE A KILLING ON FLAME-PROOF MITTENS IF WE'D BEEN TOLD --
KEEP IT IN YER HAT, PICKLEFLOGGER.


DOOM
IMPRESSIVE. ISN'T IT? FEAR NOT, THE ABBEY WILL FALL NEXT... PEEL DID ME THE HONOR OF SAVING IT FOR LAST, THAT I MIGHT PREPARE.
THE PURGING OF LONDON IS INDEED THE BEGINNING OF THE END.
YOU MUST KNOW IT. FOR ALL HIS HUBRIS AND SCIENCE AND GOD PLAY... OUR MASTER HAS BEEN STRUCK WHERE HE LIVES.
HE'LL FEEL THIS WORSE THAN I.
DOUBTFUL. THE FOREST FEELS NOT THE DEATH OF ONE TREE.
THE SUN WEEPS NOT FOR FLAMES SMOTHERED.
THIS FIRE WILL STRENGTHEN HIM. GIVE MORE BLOOD --
IN CASE I'M NOT AVAILED AN OPPORTUNITY TO SAY SO LATER, FAUST --
YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A HIGHLY DISTURBING SON OF A BITCH PRONE TO FITS OF POETRY AND LOYALTY...
...BUT THERE IS STILL HOPE, IF ONE REALIZES THAT THE WORLD MOVES ON. LIFE IS CHANGE. CONSIDER IT. I DID, AND LOOK...
...A ONCE CRAVENLY CURMUDGEON GETS TO DIE A MARTYR.
I RESPECT AND VENERATE YOUR EVOLUTION, NIXON.
LIGHT AND STARSHINE TO GUIDE YOU SWIFTLY FROM THIS WORLD.
KLANG
FAUST!
WHAT --?

THIS IS WHERE IT ENDS, DIG? LAST SONG. LAST DANCE. LAST CHANCE.
I'M TAKING YOU OUT... FOR RUSK. FOR ME.
I'M NOT AFRAID ANYMORE.
THAT MUST BE PLEASANT.
NO!
RUN, BOY! BE OFF WITH YOU, NOW!
PROVE YOUR FEARLESSNESS, THEN. AVENGE YOUR LOVED ONE. RAIN FIRE AND END THE TRAVELS OF THE LONE WANDERER.
BLAM BLAM BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM BLAM
click
click click click
LESSON ONE, CHILD. BULLETS CANNOT BANISH FEAR.
NO... I HIT YOU... I HIT YOU.
TAKE COMFORT, YOU DID THE RIGHT THING, CHILD. IN THE ATTEMPT AT LEAST.
HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE...
IT MAY MAKE LESSON NUMBER TWO... EASIER.

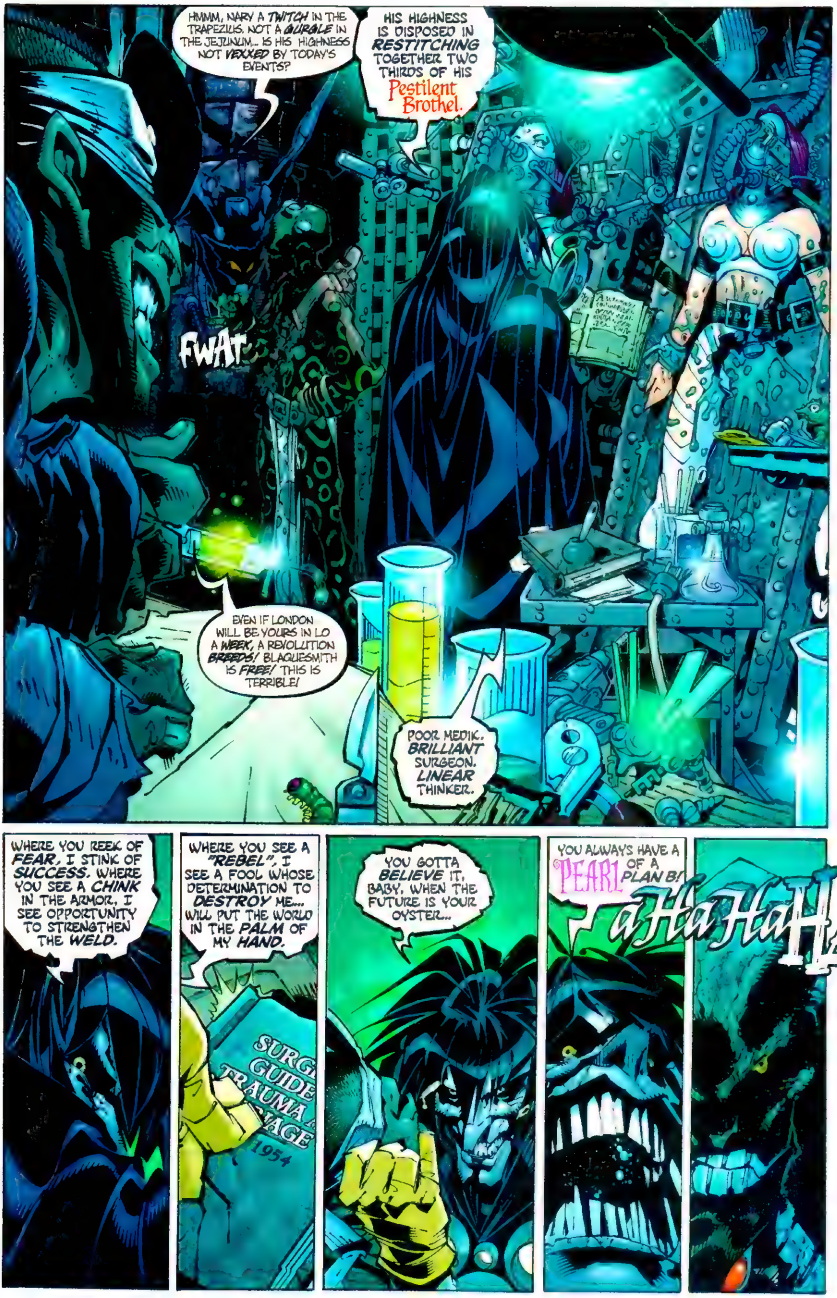
HIGHNESS! WE NEED HELP! DOUBLE TIME --
KRNCH
KRNCH
WOULD SOMEONE BE SO KIND AS TO TELL ME WHY IT ISN'T RAINING VICKI PARIS...
...AND WHY MY CITY IS BURNING?!
Blaquesmith!
HAVE FAITH, SIRE... STRAP IS WITH THEM. AND THE AIR PATROL FOLLOWS.
WHAT HAPPENED, "HIGHNESS?" CHANGE OF HEART?
?
WE HAVE NO HEART, BLAQUESMITH. REMEMBER THAT.
WE ARE MERELY REPAYING A DEBT TO A LOST BOY WHO SHOWED US KINDNESS.
AGH! AH!
HOLD ON TO SOMETHING, NOW...
...WE BELIEVE THIS RIDE MAY NOT BE ONE OF LEISURE.
SHOOOOOOOOM
SHOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM
SHOOOOOOOM
AAGH!

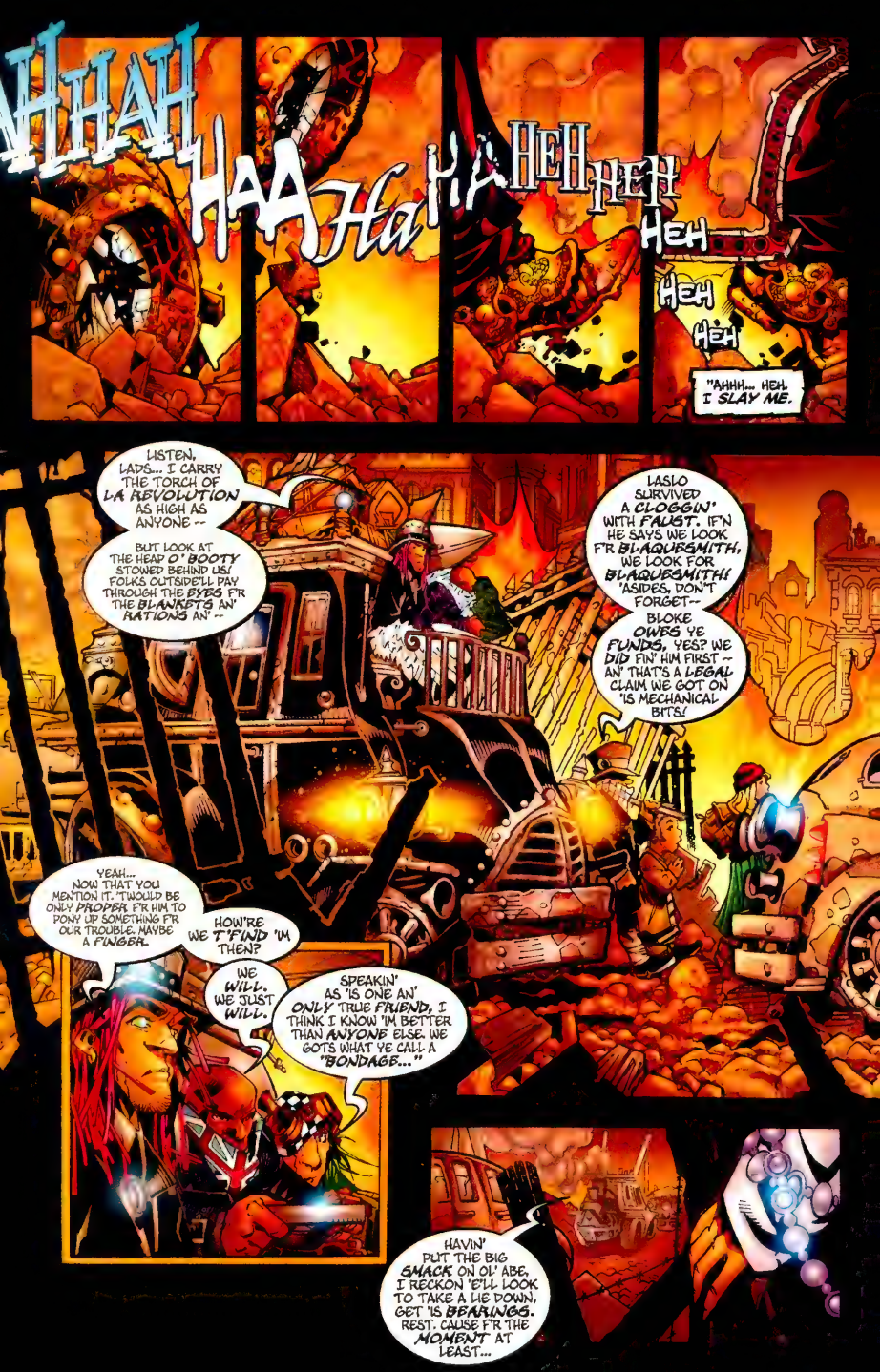
MUST YOU SQUIRM SO, BLAQUESMITH? WE CAN BARELY STEER THIS CONTRAPTION AS IT IS!
ARE THEY GAINING?
THEY'RE RIGHT -- OOF!
DONK
HERE! TAKE MY PISTOL! THE ACTION IS SIMPLE, THE AIM IS TRUE --
?
BLAM BLAM
HANG ON. THIS IS GOING TO BE CLOSE... COLE..?
CHOOM CHOOM
BLAQUESMITH..?
THIS IS HARDLY THE TIME TO PLAY DUMB, BOY! YOU'RE MY EYES! SPEAK!
HNNGRH!
ART THOU IRKED THAT A WOMAN GIVES YOU ORDERS?
WELL, WE SHALL BE MORE THAN PLEASED TO DEPOSIT YOU AT THE NEAREST --
?
BUT YOU --
-- WHO?
?
OH. FAUX PAS.

ALLOW US.
POW
SPLASH
LOOK OUT...
THUMP
HOW DO YE MAKE THIS BIRD BREATHE FIRE, VICTORIA?
YOU'RE GOING BACK FOR ABSINTHE?
COLE, TODAY YOU HAVE DONE SOMETHING FEW EVER DREAMED POSSIBLE. YOU HURT THE KING OF HALF THE WORLD.
TRADE THIS GLORY NOT FOR A FOOL'S SUICIDE.
VENGEANCE WILL KEEP TILL THE 'MORROW. TODAY... LIVE.
...
TOMORROW. I DO HAVE PLENTY OF TOMORROW, AYE.
I WOULD NOT LEAVE LONDON WITHOUT PAYING PROPER RESPECTS.
IT'S THE BUTTON ON THE RIGHT.
THANK YOU.
KRAK
KOOM
WE ARE DULY IMPRESSED, BLAQUESMITH.
DULY IMPRESSED.

LOOK! IT'S BLAQUESMITH! LOOK!
AYE. GODSPEED, COLE... WHEREVER YOU'RE HEADED.
LONDON WILL MISS HIS HERO --
WHAT NOW, SIR PEEL? YE'VE SENT YER MAN TO THE AIR... WHAT DO WE DO ON THE GROUND?
"MY" MAN? WHAT DO I --?
"WE"... WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
WE GIVE LONDON A REVOLUTION!
HMMMMM... NOPE, NO SIR. NO ROOM AT THE INN. THE FISH STAYS.
EVEN DURIN' THE BLEEDIN' RAPTURE, YER A JEALOUS TWIT! WHAT'S FLINT E'ER DONE TO YOU, YE ONE WINGED NANCY?!
JES' LOOK AT MY EYES, DEVIOUS. I JUST KNOW HE'S PLOTTING TO LEAP OUT OF THAT BOWL AND FUNK UP MY PLUMAGE.
FLINT RIDES WITH ME TO THE RENDEZVOUS. ONE MORE GAB OUTTA YOU, AN' I GET MY PLUCKIN' PINCERS.
YOU CATS... AREN'T GOING TO THE CAMP... NOT YET ANYWAY...
GREAT KRIKEY.
NOT UNTIL WE FIND BLAQUESMITH...
I MAY BE A FOOL... BUT I'LL BE DAMNED IF I SHILL ON THE DYING WISH OF A GOOD MAN.

THERE IS A BREACH IN THE UNIVERSE.
THE PERFECT MACHINE OF LONDON, HER HEARTPUMP AND STEELSOUL -- CRACKED IN THE BLOCK BY A PEASANT OF IRON...
BOOM
FLIP FLAP
AND A LITTLE DRAGON WHO, PERHAPS, HAS FOUND LOST FLAME.
A GENTLEMAN NEVER TURNS HIS BACK ON HIS AFFAIRS. ON MY IMMORTAL SOUL, ABSINTHE, I SWEAR TRUE...
I WILL NOT REST UNTIL I UNDO WHAT I HAVE DONE.
A DEAD MAN TOLD AN OLD GRANITE SOLDIER, "THE WORLD MOVES ON." AS THE BARBWIRE TEETH ARE BURST FROM LONDON'S MAW...
THE EARTH SPINS WITHOUT MY MASTER'S PERMISSION... FOR THE FIRST TIME.
A GENTLE TREMOR ENGULFS ME.
FLAP FLIP
THREE PHALANX OF DOG SOLDIERS HAVE BEEN RECALLED TO LONDON, SIRE.
BY WEEK'S END, THIS "DISTURBANCE" WILL BE OVER.
FLIP FLAP


HMMM, NARY A TWITCH IN THE TRAPEZIUS. NOT A GURGLE IN THE JEJUNUM... IS HIS HIGHNESS NOT VEXXED BY TODAY'S EVENTS?
HIS HIGHNESS IS DISPOSED IN RESTITCHING TOGETHER TWO THIRDS OF HIS Pestilent Brothel.
FWAT
EVEN IF LONDON WILL BE YOURS IN LO A WEEK, A REVOLUTION BREEDS! BLAQUESMITH IS FREE! THIS IS TERRIBLE!
POOR MEDIK. BRILLIANT SURGEON. LINEAR THINKER.
WHERE YOU REEK OF FEAR, I STINK OF SUCCESS. WHERE YOU SEE A CHINK IN THE ARMOR, I SEE OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN THE WELD.
WHERE YOU SEE A "REBEL", I SEE A FOOL WHOSE DETERMINATION TO DESTROY ME... WILL PUT THE WORLD IN THE PALM OF MY HAND.
SURG GUIDE TRAUMA AGE 1954
YOU GOTTA BELIEVE IT, BABY, WHEN THE FUTURE IS YOUR OYSTER...
YOU ALWAYS HAVE A PEARL OF A PLAN B!
aHa Ha HA


AHHAH
HAA
Ha
HEH
HEH
HEH
HEH
HEH
"AHHH... HEH. I SLAY ME.
LISTEN, LADS... I CARRY THE TORCH OF LA REVOLUTION AS HIGH AS ANYONE --
BUT LOOK AT THE HEAP O' BOOTY STOWED BEHIND US! FOLKS OUTSIDE'LL PAY THROUGH THE BYES FR THE BLANKETS AN' RATIONS AN' --
LASLO SURVIVED A CLOGGIN' WITH FAUST. IF'N HE SAYS WE LOOK FR BLAQUESMITH, WE LOOK FOR BLAQUESMITH! 'ASIDES, DON'T FORGET--
BLOKE OWES YE FUNDS, YES? WE DID FIN' HIM FIRST -- AN' THAT'S A LEGAL CLAIM WE GOT ON 'IS MECHANICAL BITS!
YEAH... NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT. 'TWOULD BE ONLY PROPER FR HIM TO PONY UP SOMETHING FR OUR TROUBLE. MAYBE A FINGER.
HOW'RE WE T'FIND 'IM THEN?
WE WILL. WE JUST WILL.
SPEAKIN' AS 'IS ONE AN' ONLY TRUE FRIEND, I THINK I KNOW 'IM BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE. WE GOTS WHAT YE CALL A "BONDAGE..."
HAVIN' PUT THE BIG SMACK ON OL' ABE, I RECKON 'E'LL LOOK TO TAKE A LIE DOWN, GET 'IS BEARINGS. REST. CAUSE F'R THE MOMENT AT LEAST...

WHAT'S 'E GOT LEFT T'FIGHT FOR?
ACT ONE OF
STEAMPUNK
ENDS
The Saga Continues, September 2000 in Act Two:
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PART ONE OF THREE

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'He was like...ev'ry knight o' the Table Round rolled together an' reborn in one man. Lightning in his eyes and the sun burnin' in 'is heart.
An' I stood this close from 'im. From finger to nose. I did, so know this be true. Ye don' walk with a giant an' f'rget it soon, no sir!
Word 'as it 'e was conjured up by ol' wizards on the edge of Necropolis, a monster t'free us underdwellers from Lord Absinthe an' 'is rule --
But I got's the story true. Man's name is 'is trade-- Cole Blaquesmith. Brother of the steel who traded his own arm f'r a hammer, an' 'is heart for a forge.
A simple man pushed too far by the terror of the Absinthe Crown when they kidnapped 'is beloved wife an' slaughtered 'is four children.
Cole trained 'is own body t'be the weapon that would bring down Lord Absinthe. 'E 'as a glorious steed, Abragorne, an' a mysterious locket round 'is neck which he never opens an'
BOLLOCKS!

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YOU'RE A LIAR AND A STRUMPET, BELLA, AN' I WON'T HAVE YOU FOUL UP MY EAR WITH YOUR HOGWASH!
NO... STRUTH... ON ME MOTHER'S HEART--
RIGHT. YOU'RE NEARLY TURNED TO PASTIE BY A PRIEST WITH A FISHBOWL ON HIS HEAD--
--AND THAT MAKES YOU THE AUTHORITY ON COLE BLAQUESMITH?!
YOU'RE JUS' TICKED OFF 'CAUSE YER MUM CANNAE FIND YE GOOD GRUBS TO EAT OUT HERE, FRANCIS!
I DO KNOW COLE BLAQUESMITH, AND 'IS COMRADES --
LADY VICTORIA HERSELF ELPED ME PUSH THE IRON MONK INTA 'IS HOLY SAUSAGE MAKIN' MACHINE. SHE DID...
I'LL SAY IT AGAIN, IZZY, BOLLOCKS!
JUST 'CAUSE YOU USE BIG WORDS DON'T MAKE IT TRUE!
COLE BLAQUESMITH ISN'T NO KNIGHT OF THE ROUND TABLE, AND HE'S NOT THE SAVIOR OF NOTHING!
HE'S THE ENEMY OF THE STATE WHO GOT US FORCED OUT OF OUR HOMES AND HAD HALF OF LONDON BURNED DOWN BECAUSE HE WAS LAZY AND DIDN'T WANT TO WORK FOR AN HONEST DAY'S WAGE LIKE MY DA--
AN' NOW WE'RE STUCK IN THE WOODS WITH OUR BEDS AN' TOYS ALL ASHES BECAUSE OF HIM!
--snf--
I WON'T HOLD WHAT YOU JUST SAID 'GAINST YE, AS I KNOW YOU'RE UPSET, AND A MIGHT TOUCHED IN THE 'EAD, BUT YOU LISTEN...
THE NOBLE COLE BLAQUESMITH FIGHTS FOR OUR FREEDOM.
HE FIGHTS FOR US. FOR ALL OF US.
CALL THAT BOLLOCKS AGAIN, AN' I'LL SMACK YOU ONE.

UNDERSTAND ME YOU 'ORRIBLE CHILD?
I- ISABELLA...
GOOD. 'POLOGIES *ACCEPTED*... -:snif:- DON' LOOK SO *SCARED*, FRANCIS... I AIN'T *REALLY* GONNA POP YOU.
HOW ABOUT I'LL TELL YOU 'BOUT HOW COLE AN' I *KICKED* ABSINTHE UP THE TAIL AN' BACK DOWN THE *FRONT* UNTIL HIS LORDSHIP *BEGGED* F'R MERCY?

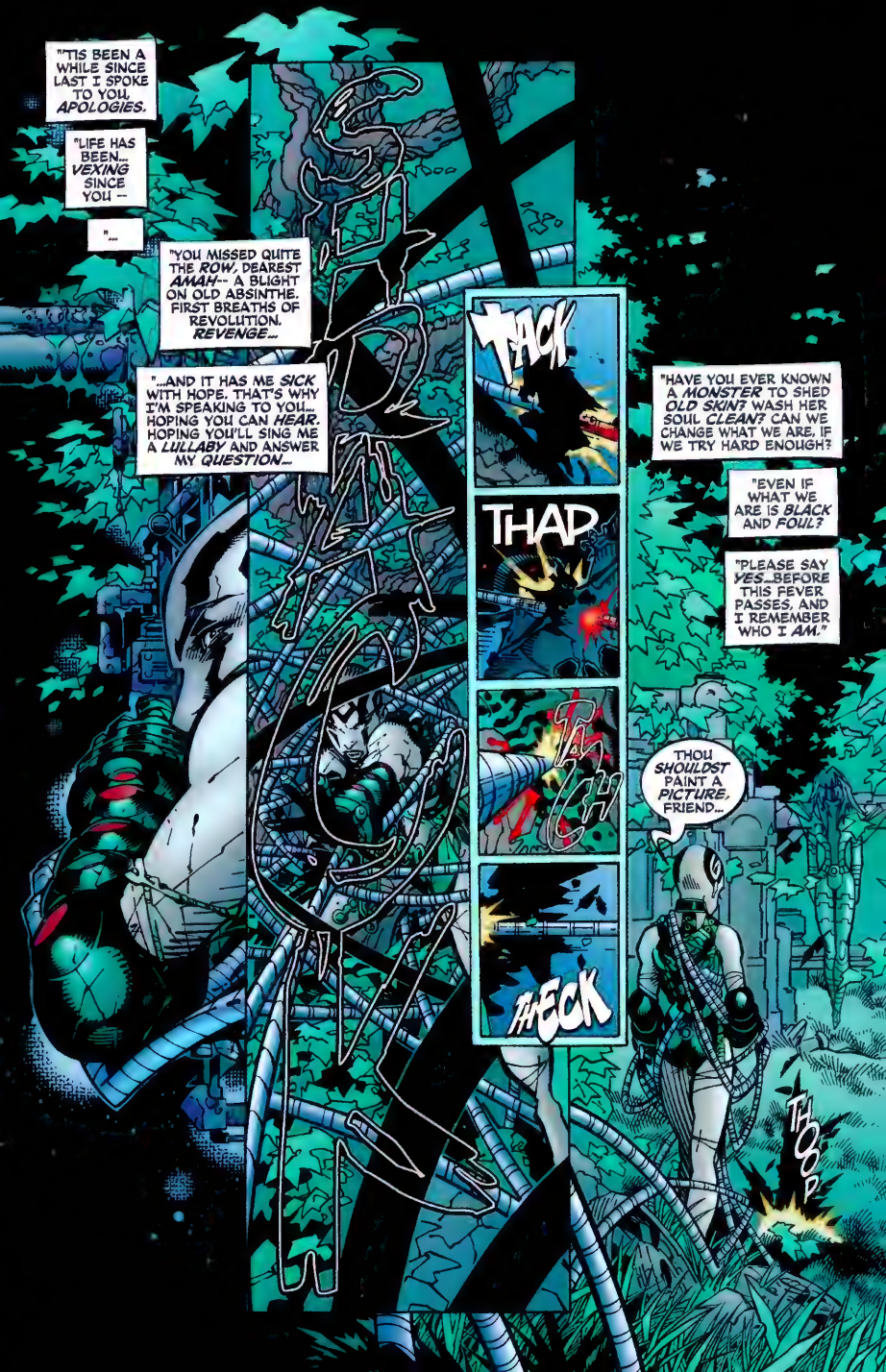
SNNRRT
LOOKIE WHAT I FOUND SQUATTING UNDER THE WASTE HEAP, LADS!
MINIATURE ANARCHISTS! AN' THIS ONE'S A COMPATRIOT OF THE HEAD BUGGER HIMSELF, COLE BLAQUEHEART!
AIIIEE!
KNOW WHAT DOG SOLDIERS DO T' REVOLUTIONARIES, MAGGOT?
WE FLAY THE SKIN FROM THEIR SHINS -:SNNRRT:- AND USE THEIR FINGERNAILS FOR POKER CHIPS.
...
PTUI
YOU DON'T SCARE ME, PIG! AN' 'IS NAME'S BLAQUESMITH! REMEMBER IT F'R WHEN 'E TURNS YOU INTO CHOPS!
HEH. FEISTY. HEE HEEE...
CATCH. PLAY CATCH.
POOR LITTLE GIRL POISONED BY ANARCHY. LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE TO OPEN UP THAT SKULL OF YOURS--
--AN' WASH THOSE NASTY THOUGHTS OUT OF YOUR BRAIN BITS!
HEE. CATCH.
CATCH! HEE-HE-HEE-CAT--
CRUNCH!

THAP
Oh?
Oh...
WHAT PIECE OF DUNG MIGHT YOU BE WHO THINKS HE CAN MANHANDLE AN OFFICER OF THE CROWN?!
LEAVE THE BRAT FOR DESSERT, LADS! LET'S HAVE AT THE BIG ONE!
TWOKUK
POP
HRRF!
GRARR!
T-TIS HIM... TIS REALLY HIM...THANK YE, GOD. THANK YE--
HRNN!
BRELLY?
AARGH!
SEE? DID I TELL YOU? A KNIGHT.
THE MOST HONORABLE AND CHIVALROUS--
GLCHH!
AIEE!
DID YOU SEE THAT? HE--HE-- EEWW!
BRELLY?!
HRNN!
SO... NOBLE..?
NOOO!
TH-THAT MAN'S FACE IS ON FIRE.
C-CAN KNIGHTS SET PEOPLE ON FIRE?
'E WAS GOING TO PUT ME ON A PIKE, YOU KNOW--
EGADS.
KABUKI

...
...
WHEN NEXT YE SEARCH FOR A KNIGHT, LASS...
LOOK NO FARTHER THAN YOUR OWN SELF.
IN MY SKIN, THERE BE ONLY MONSTERS.
HE KNOWS YOU! HE REALLY KNOWS YOU! HE CALLED YE A KNIGHT!
ISABELLA BISHOP, HERO OF THE UNDERWELLERS! SCOURGE OF THE REBELLION! A KNIGHT!
TELL US MORE ABOUT HIM, ISABELLA! TELL US MORE!
D-DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...
'E'S... A MYSTERY... REALLY.

"HAIL MARY...FULL OF GRACE, THE LORD IS WITH THEE.
"BLESSED ART--
"...
TAK
"STARLIN?
TUNK
"STARLIN, CAN YOU HEAR ME? IT'S VICTORIA...I'M OUTSIDE.
THAP
"I'M OUTSIDE OF ACCURSED LONDON.
"ARE MY PRAYERS ANY CLEARER? I IMAGINE THEY WOULD BE... FREE OF THE FILTH.
"CAN YOU HEAR ME?

"CAN YOU SEE YOUR LITTLE PRINCESS NOW?"
MECHANICA SUNDOWN PART ONE
MONSTERS
A CHRIS BACHALO PRODUCTION
JOE KELLY
WITH RICHARD FRIEND
MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
JAMES ROCHELLE
RICHARD STARKINGS
AND COMICRAFT'S SHIDA!
JOHN LAYMAN AND
SCOTT DUNBIER
LAST ISSUE
London burned. Pushed to vengeance by a painful return to memory, Cole Blaquesmith takes up arms against Absinthe and his army. With Robert Peel and the resistance, Cole levies a first strike for freedom, bursting open the gates of London. Hiding in the forest, Cole and Victoria bide their time as Cole tries to determine the next step in his long journey.



"'TIS BEEN A WHILE SINCE LAST I SPOKE TO YOU, *APOLOGIES.*

"LIFE HAS BEEN... *VEXING* SINCE YOU --

"...

"YOU MISSED QUITE THE *ROW,* DEAREST *AMAH*-- A BLIGHT ON OLD ABSINTHE. FIRST BREATHS OF REVOLUTION. *REVENGE...*

"...AND IT HAS ME *SICK* WITH HOPE. THAT'S WHY I'M SPEAKING TO YOU... HOPING YOU CAN *HEAR.* HOPING YOU'LL SING ME A *LULLABY* AND ANSWER MY *QUESTION...*

TACK

THAP

TACH

THECK

"HAVE YOU EVER KNOWN A *MONSTER* TO SHED *OLD SKIN?* WASH HER SOUL *CLEAN?* CAN WE CHANGE WHAT WE ARE, IF WE TRY HARD ENOUGH?

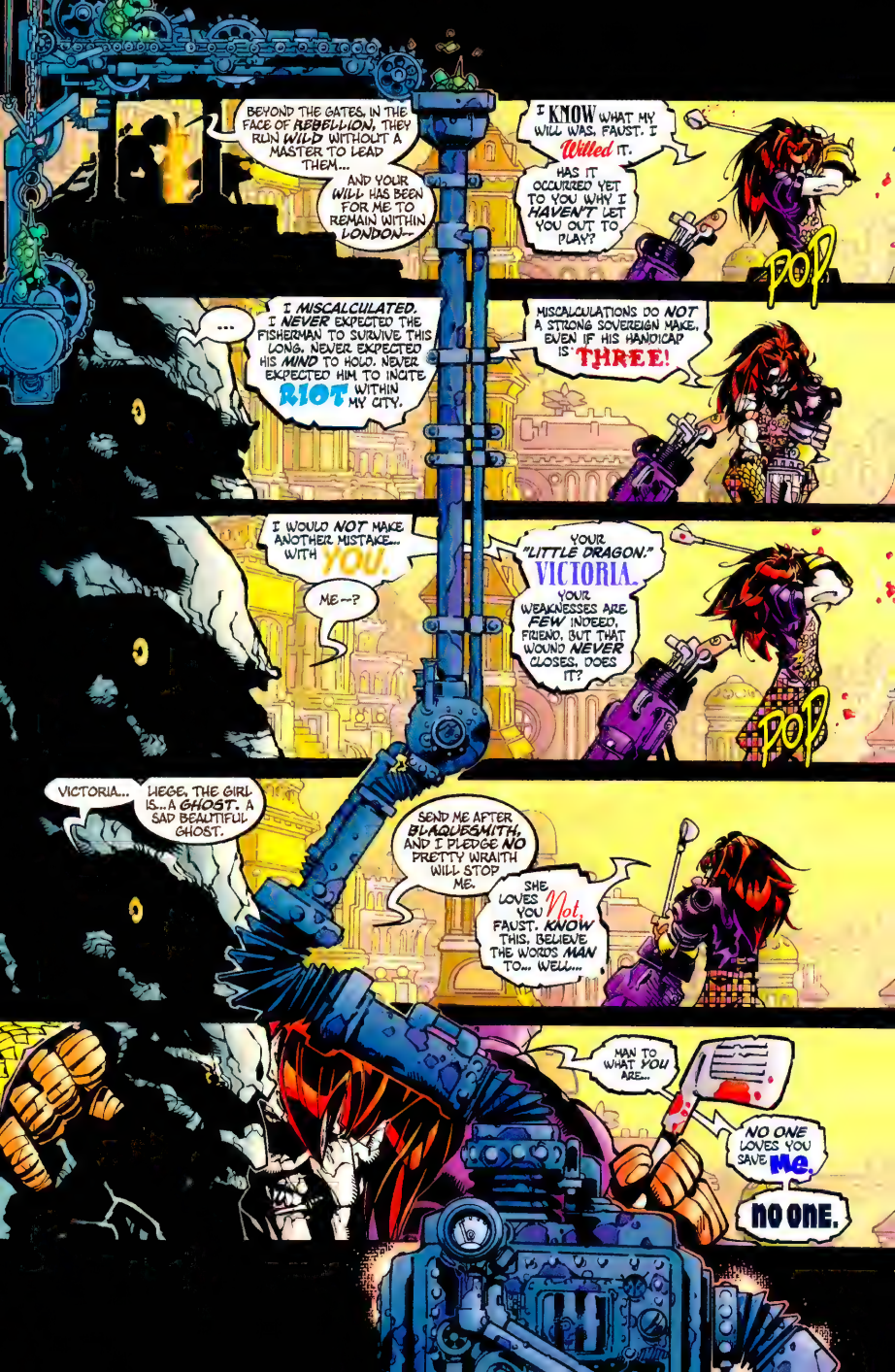
"EVEN IF WHAT WE ARE IS *BLACK* AND *FOUL?*

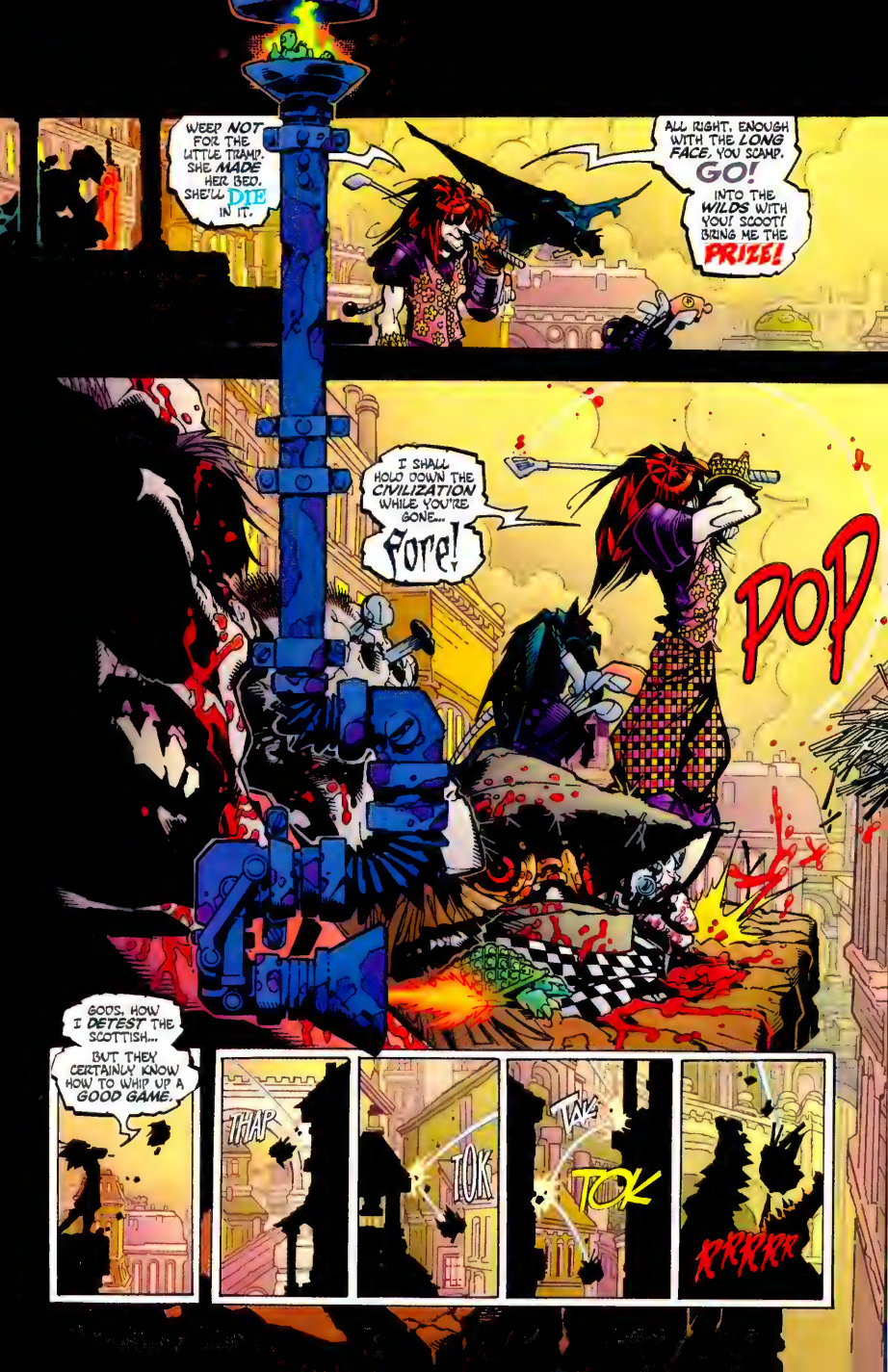
"PLEASE SAY *YES...*BEFORE THIS FEVER PASSES, AND I REMEMBER WHO I *AM.*"

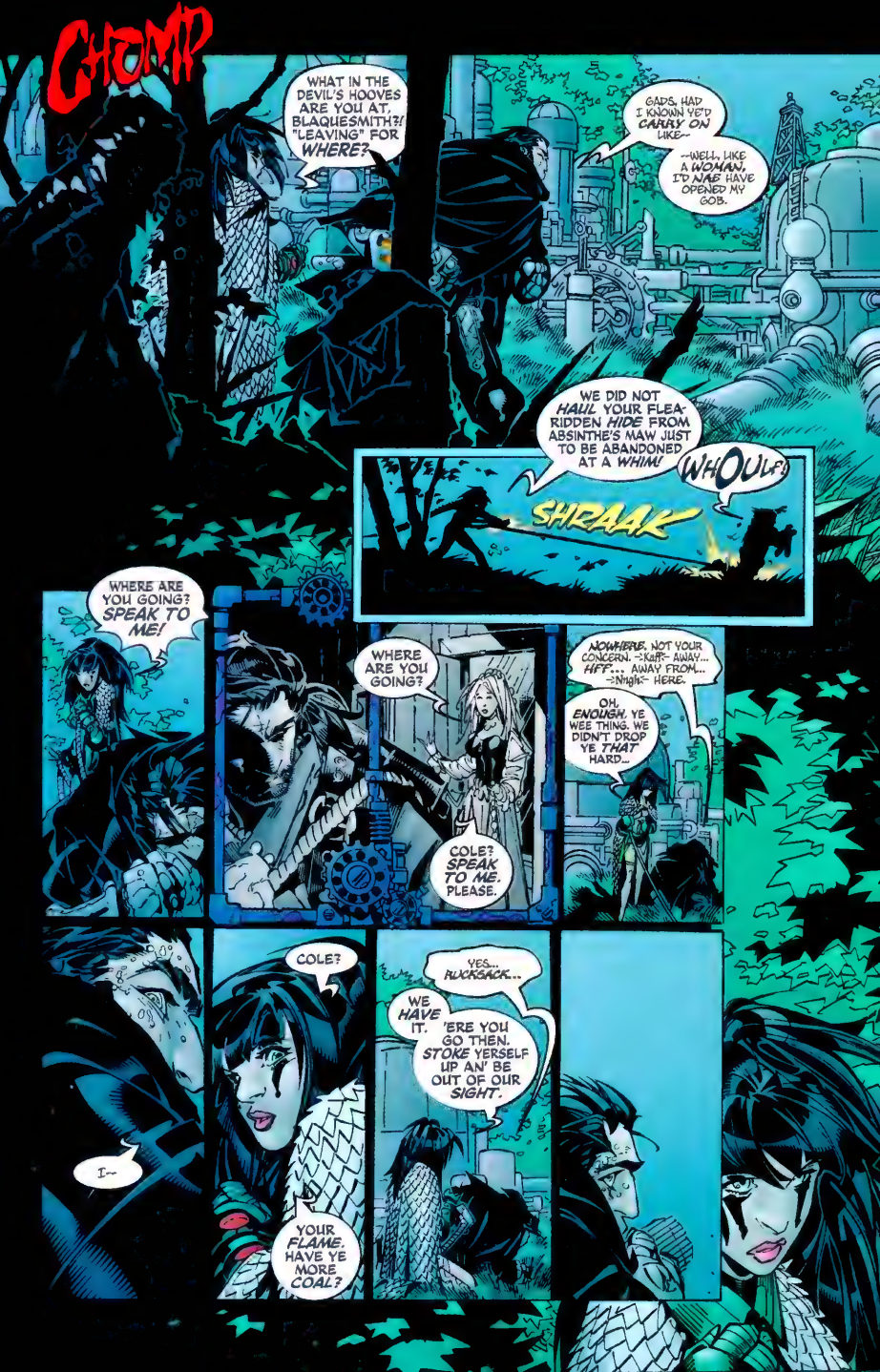
THOU *SHOULDST* PAINT A *PICTURE,* FRIEND...

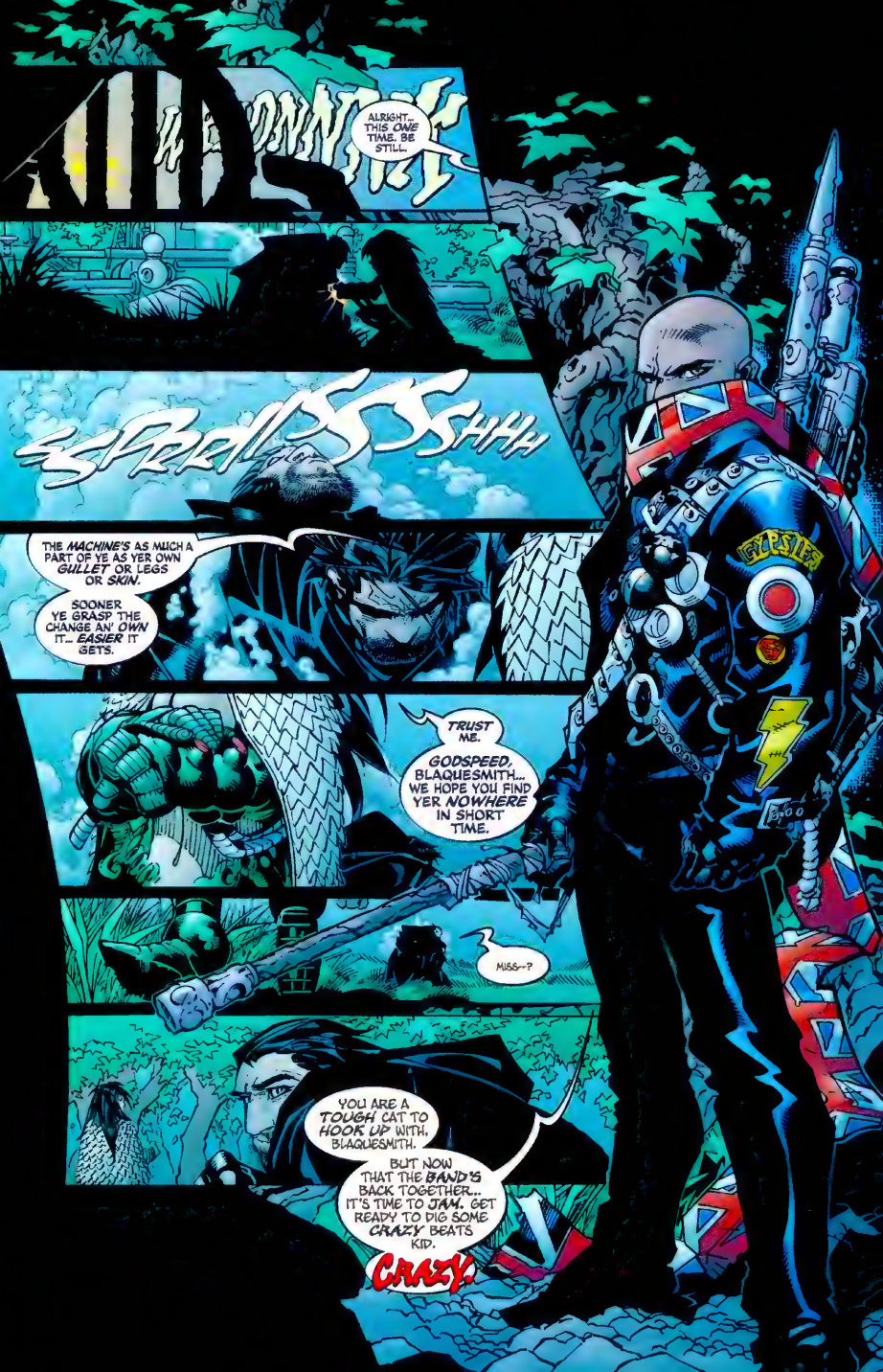
THOOP

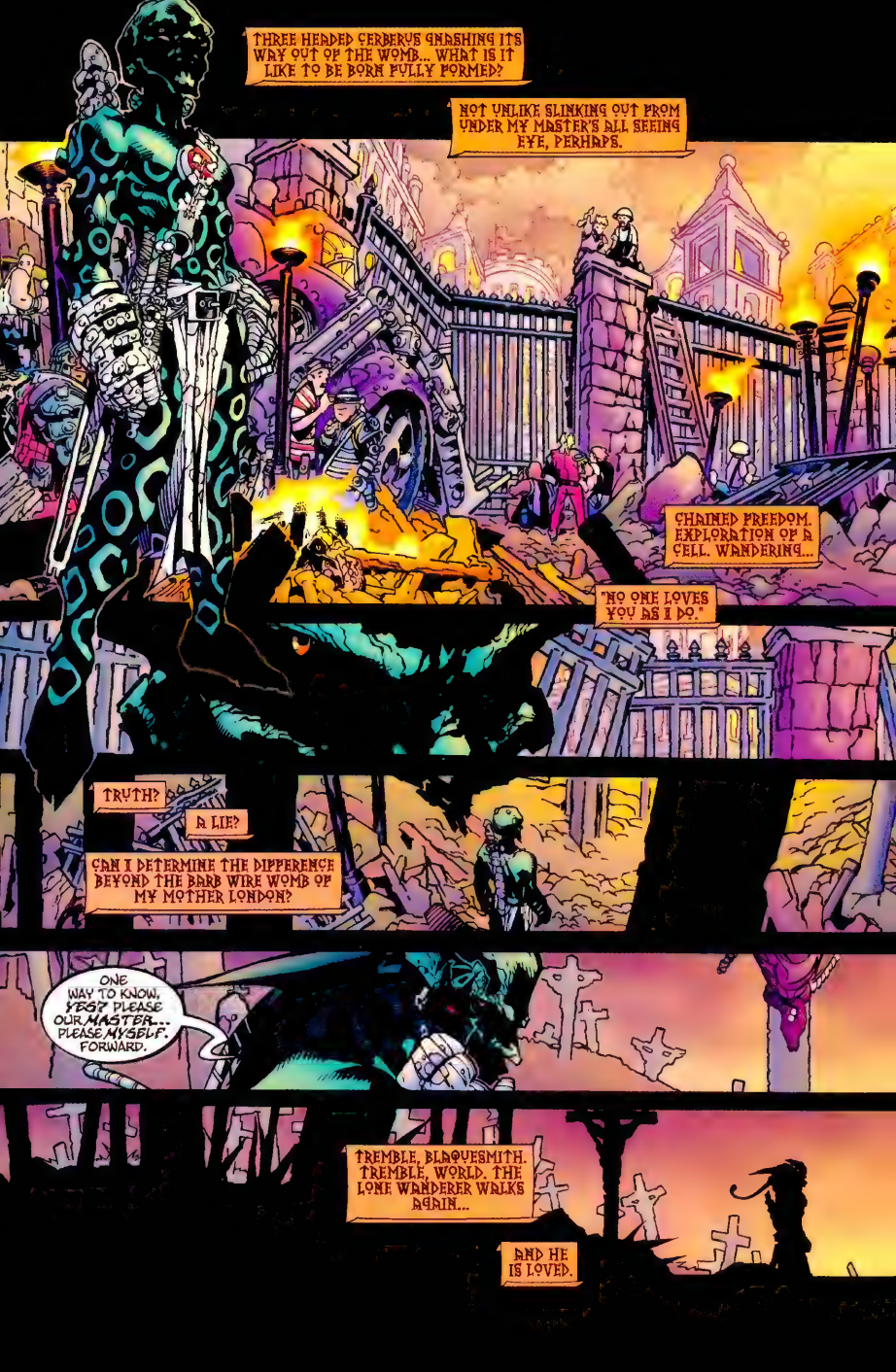
SHARK
...TWOULD LAST LONGER.
I-- NO, YOU...
YOU SHOULDN'T KILL WHAT YOU AREN'T GOING TO EAT.
WE'RE NOT HUNGRY. NOT FOR FOREST VERMIN. AT LEAST.
THOUGH WE DO HAVE... APPETITES.
MISS. PLEASE--
BEGGING ALREADY? AND WE HAVEN'T YET BEGUN--
VICTORIA...
I'M LEAVING.
I HAVE NOT SLEPT SINCE THE WORLD OPENED, THREE WEEKS AGO.
MY EYES ARE DRY WITH SMOKE AND BLACK WITH ASH AND RED WITH DESIRE...
DESIRE TO CRADLE THE BROKEN WORLD IN MY ARMS, AND SHUT HER SPRAWLING GATES...
THAT I MAY FORGET WHAT LIES BEYOND, AND LIVE AGAIN.
CRUNCH
TIME GROWS COLD, M'LORD. HAVE WE NOT YET FINISHED WITH THE PLAYING OF GAMES?
WHAT ARE GAMES, FAUST, BUT PETIT GUERRE? TINY WARS BETWEEN LARGE MEN?
BESIDES... HISTORY TELLS US THE MASSES PREFER THEIR MONARCHS TO EXCEL IN THE ATHLETIC ARTS.
SIGH I TALK TOO MUCH SOMETIMES. DON'T I?
FAUST. WHY HAVE MY DOGS NOT BROUGHT THEIR MASTER BLAQUESMITH'S BONES?

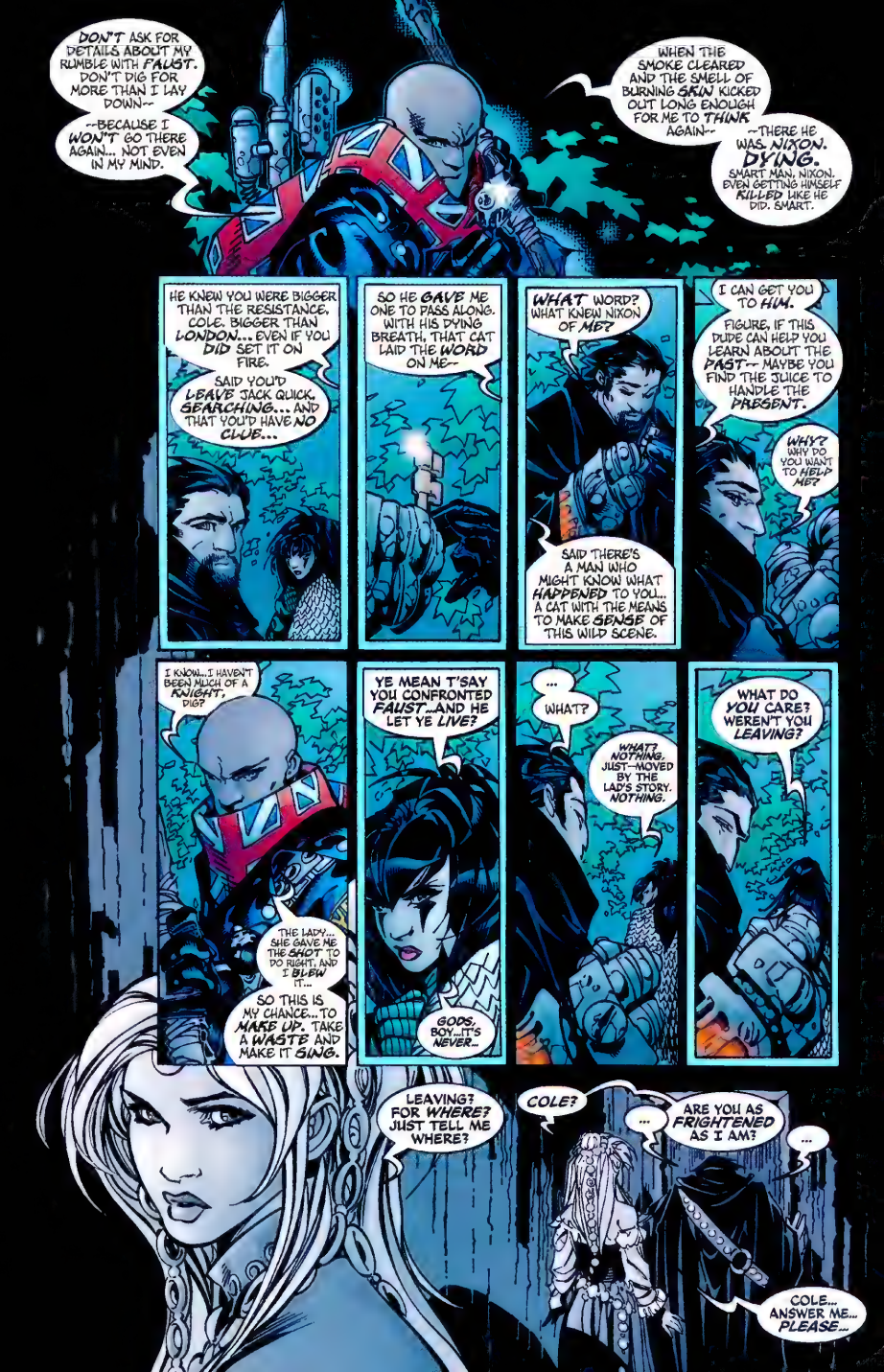

BEYOND THE GATES, IN THE FACE OF REBELLION, THEY RUN WILD WITHOUT A MASTER TO LEAD THEM...
AND YOUR WILL HAS BEEN FOR ME TO REMAIN WITHIN LONDON...
I KNOW WHAT MY WILL WAS, FAUST. I Willed IT.
HAS IT OCCURRED YET TO YOU WHY I HAVEN'T LET YOU OUT TO PLAY?
POP
...
I MISCALCULATED. I NEVER EXPECTED THE FISHERMAN TO SURVIVE THIS LONG. NEVER EXPECTED HIS MIND TO HOLD. NEVER EXPECTED HIM TO INCITE RIOT WITHIN MY CITY.
MISCALCULATIONS DO NOT A STRONG SOVEREIGN MAKE. EVEN IF HIS HANDICAP IS THREE!
I WOULD NOT MAKE ANOTHER MISTAKE... WITH YOU.
ME--?
YOUR "LITTLE DRAGON." VICTORIA.
YOUR WEAKNESSES ARE FEW INDEED, FRIEND. BUT THAT WOUND NEVER CLOSES. DOES IT?
POP
VICTORIA...
LIEGE, THE GIRL IS... A GHOST. A SAD BEAUTIFUL GHOST.
SEND ME AFTER BLAQUESMITH, AND I PLEDGE NO PRETTY WRAITH WILL STOP ME.
SHE LOVES YOU Not, FAUST. KNOW THIS. BELIEVE THE WORDS MAN TO... WELL...
MAN TO WHAT YOU ARE...
NO ONE LOVES YOU SAVE Me.
NO ONE.

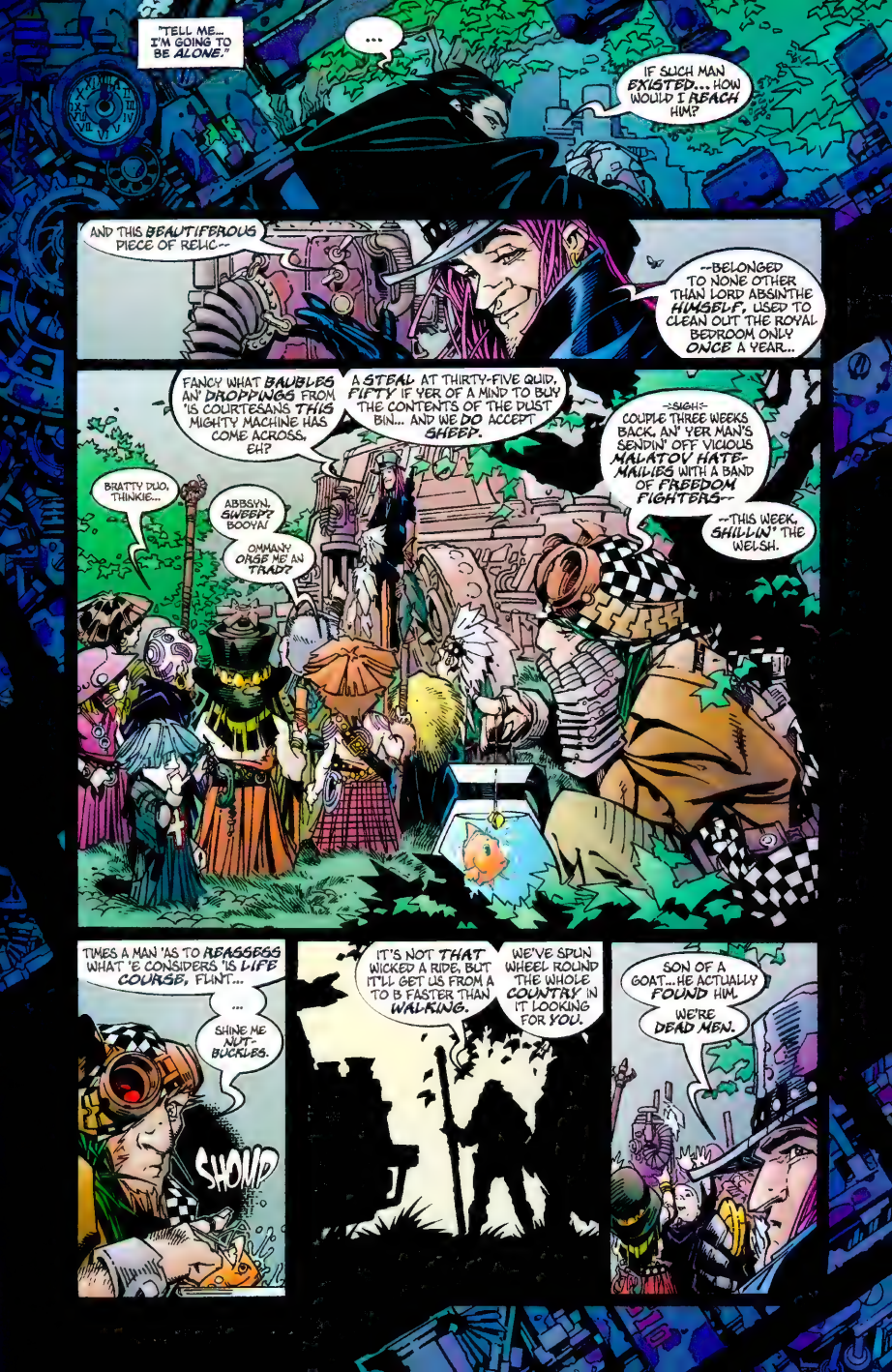

WEEP NOT FOR THE LITTLE TRAMP. SHE MADE HER BED. SHE'LL DIE IN IT.
ALL RIGHT. ENOUGH WITH THE LONG FACE, YOU SCAMP. GO! INTO THE WILDS WITH YOU! SCOOT! BRING ME THE PRIZE!
I SHALL HOLD DOWN THE CIVILIZATION WHILE YOU'RE GONE...
Fore!
POP
GODS. HOW I DETEST THE SCOTTISH...
BUT THEY CERTAINLY KNOW HOW TO WHIP UP A GOOD GAME.
THAP
TOK
TAK
TOK
RRRRR


CHOMP
WHAT IN THE DEVIL'S HOOVES ARE YOU AT, BLAQUESMITH?! "LEAVING" FOR WHERE?
GADS, HAD I KNOWN YE'D CARRY ON LIKE--
--WELL, LIKE A WOMAN, I'D NAE HAVE OPENED MY GOB.
WE DID NOT HAUL YOUR FLEA-RIDDEN HIDE FROM ABSINTHE'S MAW JUST TO BE ABANDONED AT A WHIM!
SHRAAK
WHOULF!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING? SPEAK TO ME!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
COLE? SPEAK TO ME. PLEASE.
NOWHERE. NOT YOUR CONCERN. -KaR- AWAY... HFT... AWAY FROM... -Nngh- HERE.
OH, ENOUGH. YE WEE THING. WE DIDN'T DROP YE THAT HARD..
COLE?
I--
YOUR FLAME. HAVE YE MORE COAL?
YES... RUCKSACK...
WE HAVE IT. 'ERE YOU GO THEN. STOKE YERSELF UP AN' BE OUT OF OUR SIGHT.

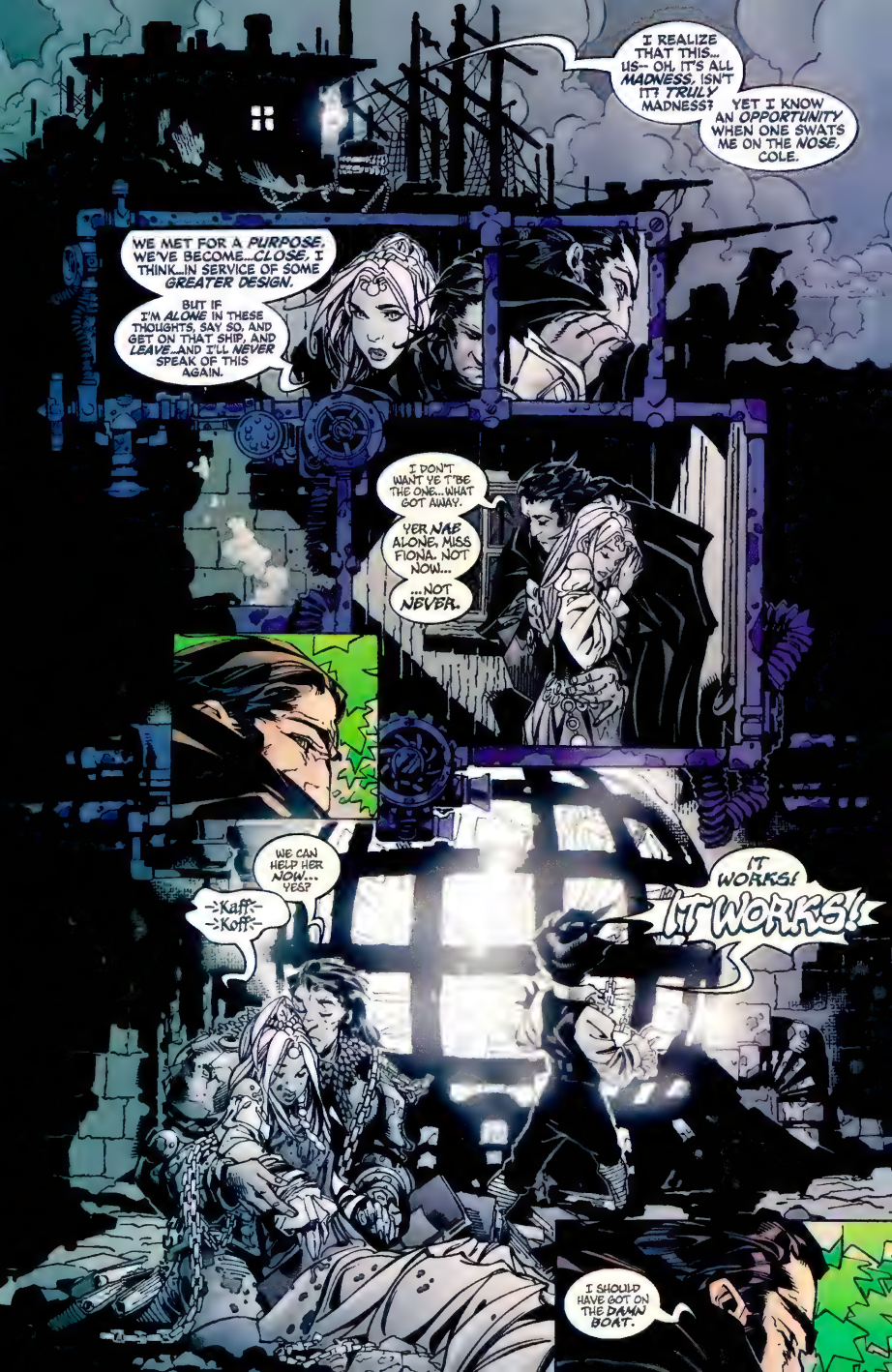

ALRIGHT... THIS ONE TIME. BE STILL.
SHHH
THE MACHINE'S AS MUCH A PART OF YE AS YER OWN GULLET OR LEGS OR SKIN.
SOONER YE GRASP THE CHANGE AN' OWN IT... EASIER IT GETS.
TRUST ME.
GODSPEED, BLAQUESMITH... WE HOPE YOU FIND YER NOWHERE IN SHORT TIME.
MISS--?
YOU ARE A TOUGH CAT TO HOOK UP WITH, BLAQUESMITH.
BUT NOW THAT THE BAND'S BACK TOGETHER... IT'S TIME TO JAM. GET READY TO DIG SOME CRAZY BEATS KID.
CRAZY.


THREE HEADED CERBERUS GNASHING ITS WAY OUT OF THE WOMB... WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE BORN FULLY FORMED?
NOT UNLIKE SLINKING OUT FROM UNDER MY MASTER'S ALL SEEING EYE, PERHAPS.
CHAINED FREEDOM. EXPLORATION OF A CELL. WANDERING...
"NO ONE LOVES YOU AS I DO."
TRUTH?
A LIE?
CAN I DETERMINE THE DIFFERENCE BEYOND THE BARB WIRE WOMB OF MY MOTHER LONDON?
ONE WAY TO KNOW. FIRST PLEASE OUR MASTER... PLEASE MYSELF. FORWARD.
TREMBLE, BLACKSMITH. TREMBLE, WORLD. THE LONE WANDERER WALKS AGAIN...
AND HE IS LOVED.


DON'T ASK FOR DETAILS ABOUT MY RUMBLE WITH FAUST. DON'T DIG FOR MORE THAN I LAY DOWN--
--BECAUSE I WON'T GO THERE AGAIN... NOT EVEN IN MY MIND.
WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARED AND THE SMELL OF BURNING SKIN KICKED OUT LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO THINK AGAIN--
--THERE HE WAS. NIXON. DYING. SMART MAN, NIXON. EVEN GETTING HIMSELF KILLED LIKE HE DID. SMART.
HE KNEW YOU WERE BIGGER THAN THE RESISTANCE, COLE. BIGGER THAN LONDON... EVEN IF YOU DID SET IT ON FIRE.
SAID YOU'D LEAVE JACK QUICK, SEARCHING... AND THAT YOU'D HAVE NO CLUE...
SO HE GAVE ME ONE TO PASS ALONG. WITH HIS DYING BREATH, THAT CAT LAID THE WORD ON ME--
WHAT WORD? WHAT KNEW NIXON OF ME?
SAID THERE'S A MAN WHO MIGHT KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU... A CAT WITH THE MEANS TO MAKE SENSE OF THIS WILD SCENE.
I CAN GET YOU TO HIM.
FIGURE, IF THIS DUDE CAN HELP YOU LEARN ABOUT THE PAST-- MAYBE YOU FIND THE JUICE TO HANDLE THE PRESENT.
WHY? WHY DO YOU WANT TO HELP ME?
I KNOW... I HAVEN'T BEEN MUCH OF A KNIGHT, DIG?
THE LADY... SHE GAVE ME THE SHOT TO DO RIGHT. AND I BLEW IT...
SO THIS IS MY CHANCE... TO MAKE UP. TAKE A WASTE AND MAKE IT SING.
YE MEAN T'SAY YOU CONFRONTED FAUST...AND HE LET YE LIVE?
GODS, BOY... IT'S NEVER...
...
WHAT?
WHAT? NOTHING. JUST--MOVED BY THE LAD'S STORY. NOTHING.
WHAT DO YOU CARE? WEREN'T YOU LEAVING?
LEAVING? FOR WHERE? JUST TELL ME WHERE?
COLE?
...
ARE YOU AS FRIGHTENED AS I AM?
...
COLE... ANSWER ME... PLEASE...


"TELL ME... I'M GOING TO BE ALONE."
...
IF SUCH MAN EXISTED... HOW WOULD I REACH HIM?
AND THIS BEAUTIFEROUS PIECE OF RELIC--
--BELONGED TO NONE OTHER THAN LORD ABSINTHE HIMSELF, USED TO CLEAN OUT THE ROYAL BEDROOM ONLY ONCE A YEAR...
FANCY WHAT BAUBLES AN' DROPPINGS FROM 'IS COURTESANS THIS MIGHTY MACHINE HAS COME ACROSS, EH?
A STEAL AT THIRTY-FIVE QUID, FIFTY IF VER OF A MIND TO BUY THE CONTENTS OF THE DUST BIN... AND WE DO ACCEPT SHEEP.
-SIGH- COUPLE THREE WEEKS BACK, AN' 'ER MAN'S SENDIN' OFF VICIOUS MALATOV HATE-MAILIBS WITH A BAND OF FREEDOM FIGHTERS--
--THIS WEEK, SHILLIN' THE WELSH.
BRATTY DUO, THINKIE...
ABBSVN. SWEEPS' BOOYN
OHMANY ORSE ME AN TRAD?
TIMES A MAN 'AS TO REASSESS WHAT 'E CONSIDERS 'IS LIFE COURSE, FLINT...
...
SHINE ME NUT-BUCKLES.
SHOMP
IT'S NOT THAT WICKED A RIDE, BUT IT'LL GET US FROM A TO B FASTER THAN WALKING.
WE'VE SPUN WHEEL ROUND THE WHOLE COUNTRY IN IT LOOKING FOR YOU.
SON OF A GOAT... HE ACTUALLY FOUND HIM.
WE'RE DEAD MEN.
MMM

COLE BLAQUESMITH! 'TIS TRULY THE MAN AN' THE CAN! THIS MEANS THE FIGHT IS ON AGAIN, EH? BULLY F'R US!
?
WHAT'LL IT BE THIS TIME, WOT? PISTOLS AT DAWN? OL' ABE STRUNG UP ON THE LAWN?
I'LL TAKE IT.
TELL ME HOW TO FIND THIS PLACE.
TELL YOU--? NO... I'M COMING WITH YOU--
OH NO YOU DON'T, YOU PAN-HANDLED MASHER!
THAT'S MY TRUCK!
WE'VE GOT A GOOD THING GOING HERE, AN' WE'RE NOT ABOUT TO WRECK IT F'R SIR MOPES-A-LOT! AN' BESIDES--
THAT ARM OF YOURS IS RIGHTFULLY MINE! I NEARLY BROKE A WING-- URRK!
BOLT IT, DINGIS.
DIDN'T YOU HEAR A WORD I SAID? THIS ISN'T JUST ABOUT YOU, MAN. THIS IS THE FIGHT. THIS IS MY CHANCE TO SET THINGS RIGHT--
NO. 'TIS NOT--
BLAQUESMITH!!
YE HAVE MEN PRACTICALLY THROWING THEMSELVES IN FRONT OF ABSINTHE'S DAGGERS TO HELP YOU ON A FOOL'S QUEST--
FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, MAN! WHEN ARE YE JUST GOING TO DROP THE ARMOR AND ADMIT YE NEED HELP?!
BECAUSE I DO NOT!
WHY?! WHY SHOULD I LET THEM DO THESE THINGS?
SO HE CAN FEEL LESS GUILT? SO THAT ONE CAN PLAY SOLDIER? SO YOU CAN--
...
WHY ARE YOU STILL HERE?
...
I CAN'T SPEAK F'R THE REST, MISTER... AN' I KNOW IT'S BRAIN-WRONG...
BUT SEEMS T'ME THAT YOU'RE SOMETHIN' SPECIAL... THAT AT THE END OF YOUR ROAD, THERE'S SOMETHIN'... IMPORTANT WAITIN'...
MMFF!
...AN' IF SOMETHIN' IMPORTANT AN' SPECIAL SWINGS MY WAY... I'D LIKE TO KNOW I GRABBED F'R IT.


I REALIZE THAT THIS... US— OH, IT'S ALL MADNESS, ISN'T IT? TRULY MADNESS?
YET I KNOW AN OPPORTUNITY WHEN ONE SWATS ME ON THE NOSE, COLE.
WE MET FOR A PURPOSE. WE'VE BECOME...CLOSE. I THINK...IN SERVICE OF SOME GREATER DESIGN.
BUT IF I'M ALONE IN THESE THOUGHTS, SAY SO, AND GET ON THAT SHIP, AND LEAVE...AND I'LL NEVER SPEAK OF THIS AGAIN.
I DON'T WANT YE T'BE THE ONE...WHAT GOT AWAY.
YER NAE ALONE, MISS FIONA. NOT NOW...
...NOT NEVER.
WE CAN HELP HER NOW... YES?
-Kaff-
-Koff-
IT WORKS!
IT WORKS!
I SHOULD HAVE GOT ON THE DAMN BOAT.

WHY YE HAVE CHOSEN THIS POOR BEGGAR, I CANNAE SAY...
'PRECIATE IT...MISGUIDED AS YE MAY BE.
SO IF'N YE MUST... WE CAN RIDE TOGETHER T' LASLO'S MYSTERY HOUSE. NO FARTHER.
BUT DO SO WITH FAIR WARNING...
I'M NOT SPECIAL. I'M NOT IMPORTANT.
I'M A CURSE WITH LEGGS, AND ANYONE WHO HAS EVER EXTENDED A HAND TO ME IN KINDNESS... HAS 'AD IT CUT OFF.
IF YE FOLLOW ME ON THIS... "OPPORTUNITY..." AND YE'VE NAUGHT BUT PAIN AND MISERY TO SHOW FOR IT...
...YOU WERE WARNED.
I'LL BE IN THE CAR IF'N YE WANT TO DIE.
WELL... WE HAVE LITTLE BETTER ELSE TO DO AT THE MOMENT, AND MISERY WOULD BE A STEP UP.
AMEN, SISTER.
RIGHT CHEERY BUGGER. AIN'T HE? SURE THIS IS THE "BIG ADVENTURE" YOU'RE GOING FOR, BOYO?
SINCE I MET THAT RATCHET, I AIN'T SURE OF MUCH, SKOM...
...BUT AS WET WIND CHILLS YER INWARDS AN' SUN SCALDS A BARE BACK, I CAN SAY THIS...

TO BE CONTINUED...

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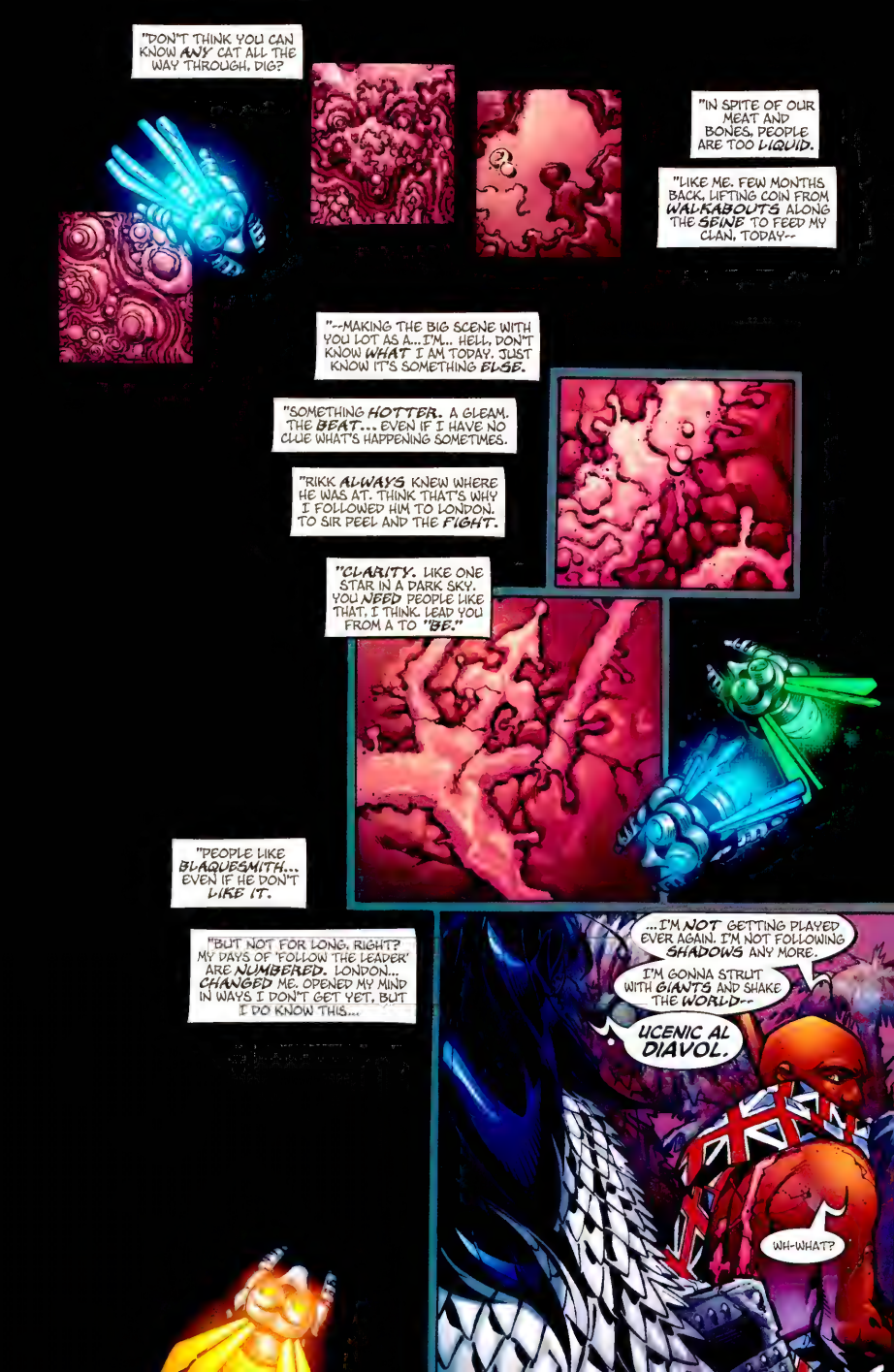
"DON'T THINK YOU CAN KNOW ANY CAT ALL THE WAY THROUGH, DIG?
"IN SPITE OF OUR MEAT AND BONES, PEOPLE ARE TOO LIQUID.
"LIKE ME. FEW MONTHS BACK, LIFTING COIN FROM WALKABOUTS ALONG THE SEINE TO FEED MY CLAN, TODAY--
"--MAKING THE BIG SCENE WITH YOU LOT AS A...I'M... HELL, DON'T KNOW WHAT I AM TODAY. JUST KNOW IT'S SOMETHING ELSE.
"SOMETHING HOTTER. A GLEAM. THE BEAT... EVEN IF I HAVE NO CLUE WHAT'S HAPPENING SOMETIMES.
"RIKK ALWAYS KNEW WHERE HE WAS AT. THINK THAT'S WHY I FOLLOWED HIM TO LONDON. TO SIR PEEL AND THE FIGHT.
"CLARITY. LIKE ONE STAR IN A DARK SKY. YOU NEED PEOPLE LIKE THAT, I THINK. LEAD YOU FROM A TO "BE."
"PEOPLE LIKE BLAQUESMITH... EVEN IF HE DON'T LIKE IT.
"BUT NOT FOR LONG, RIGHT? MY DAYS OF 'FOLLOW THE LEADER' ARE NUMBERED. LONDON... CHANGED ME. OPENED MY MIND IN WAYS I DON'T GET YET, BUT I DO KNOW THIS...
...I'M NOT GETTING PLAYED EVER AGAIN. I'M NOT FOLLOWING SHADOWS ANY MORE.
I'M GONNA STRUT WITH GIANTS AND SHAKE THE WORLD--
UCENIC AL DIAVOL.
WH-WHAT?

WHAT WAS THAT? YOU SAID...
WAS THAT ROMANIAN?
IT WOULD PLEASE US TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR BATTLE WITH FAUST. AGAIN.
I-I TOLD YOU...HE WRECKED MY TAIL AND LET ME GO.
YOU KNOW ROMANIAN? SOME OF MY CLAN'S RAP IS ROMANIAN--
FAUST IS FOULNESS AND RANCOR. FAUST IS DEATH AND DECAY...
...KILLING YOU WOULD BE AS TAKING A BREATH TO HIM.
"UCENIC ALDIAVOL..." WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? "STUDENT"--? STUDENT OF THE DEV--?
KNOWING THIS, WE MUST ASK...WHAT MOVES THE WIND TO STOP BLOWING?
WHAT KEEPS THE LION'S JAW FROM SNAPPING SHUT ON THE LAMB?
WHY DID DEATH ITSELF EXPEND THE ENERGY TO LET A COWARD GYPSY BOY LIVE?
...
I-- I'M NOT A COWARD ANYMORE. I --
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?

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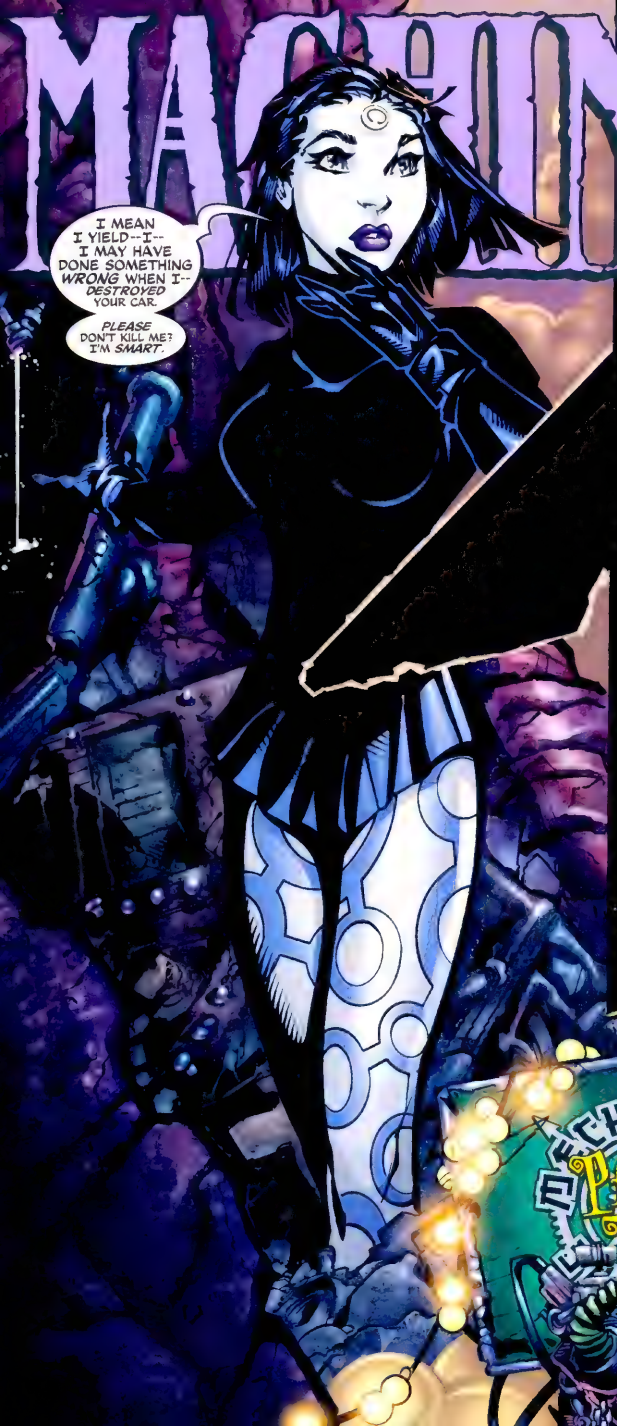
BOOM
FLINT?
THACK
ABSINTHE.

WHO'S DRIVING MY WHEELS LIKE A ONE-EYED MONGOLIAN DIRT-HERDER?! HOW'S A BODY SUPPOSED TO--
BOP?
B-BLAQUESMITH... WAIT FOR--
WE'LL...I-- NNGH...
RANDY?
BRIGHT AS A POLISHED HA'PENNY, GUV... BUT IF'N YE DON'T MIND--
--I MAY SIT THIS'N OUT. TRICK KNEES, YE KNOW... THAT AN' ME NEW CONCUSSION.
GOOD. STAY.
THAM
THAM
CHOOM
CHOOM
BLAQUESMITH...?
CHOOM
THOOM

HRRF!
KLANNGK
CHAKT
BLASTED MACHINES.
THO
BOOM
HATE MACHINES.
KRNCH
SHHRIFF
YIELD! YIELD!
WAIT!!
?!

MACHINES

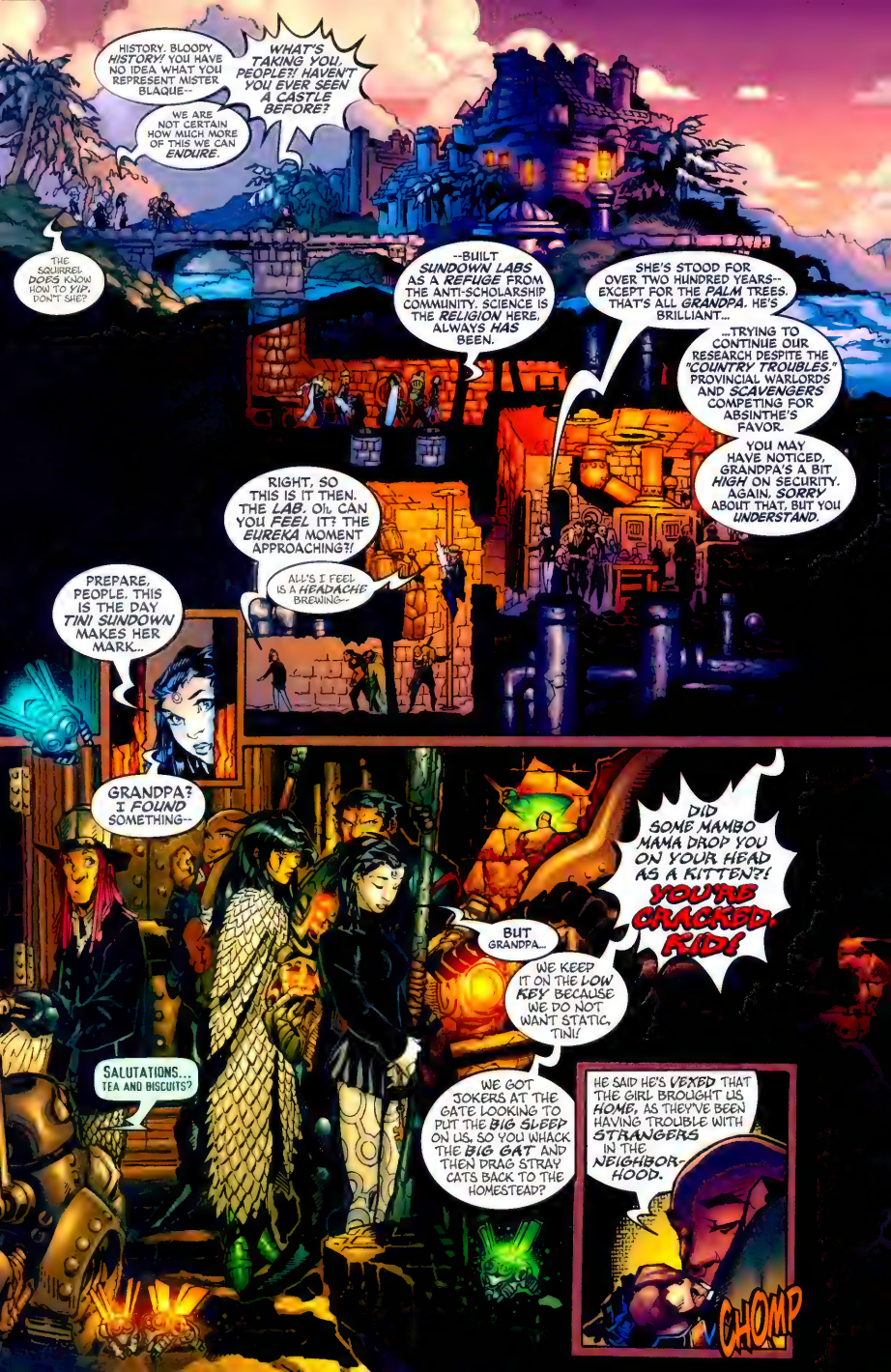


A CHRIS BACHALO JOE KELLY PRODUCTION

WITH RICHARD FRIEND INKS
JAMES ROCHELLE COLORS
RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT'S SAIDA! LETTERS
JOHN LAYMAN ASSISTANCE
SCOTT DUNBIER EDITS

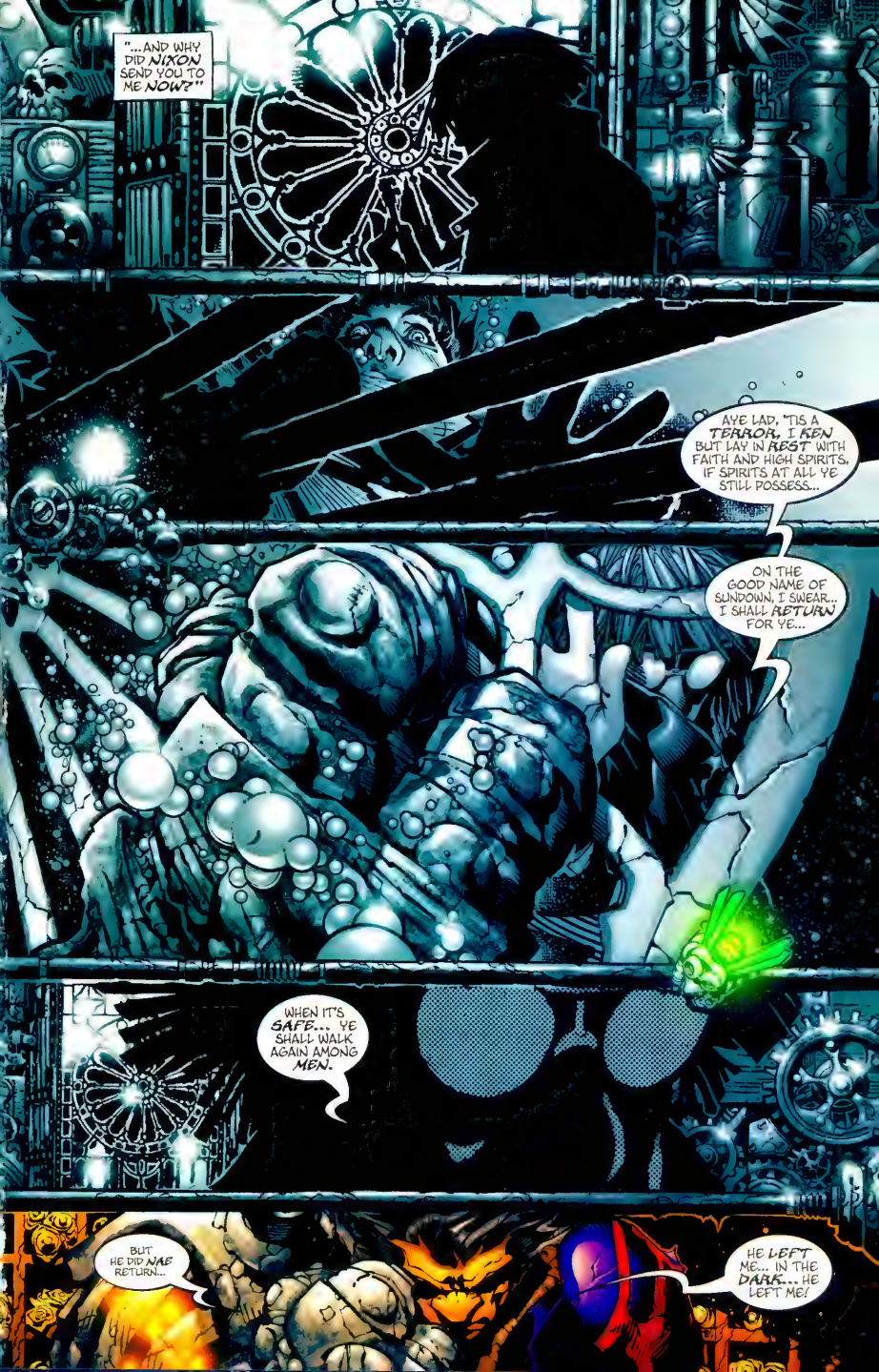
LAST ISSUE

Lacking direction in his quest against Absinthe, Cole Blaquesmith prepares to abandon his comrades, and forge ahead alone. Laslo appears with a possible lead -- a mystery man who may hold the key to Cole's clouded past. Reluctantly, Cole agrees to lead the rag-tag group into the woods, where they are ambushed!


HISTORY, BLOODY HISTORY! YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU REPRESENT, MISTER BLAQUE--
WHAT'S TAKING YOU, PEOPLE?! HAVEN'T YOU EVER SEEN A CASTLE BEFORE?
WE ARE NOT CERTAIN HOW MUCH MORE OF THIS WE CAN ENDURE.
THE SQUIRREL DOES KNOW HOW TO YIP, DON'T SHE?
--BUILT SUNDOWN LABS AS A REFUGE FROM THE ANTI-SCHOLARSHIP COMMUNITY. SCIENCE IS THE RELIGION HERE, ALWAYS HAS BEEN.
SHE'S STOOD FOR OVER TWO HUNDRED YEARS-- EXCEPT FOR THE PALM TREES. THAT'S ALL GRANDPA. HE'S BRILLIANT...
...TRYING TO CONTINUE OUR RESEARCH DESPITE THE "COUNTRY TROUBLES." PROVINCIAL WARLORDS AND SCAVENGERS COMPETING FOR ABSINTHE'S FAVOR.
YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED, GRANDPA'S A BIT HIGH ON SECURITY. AGAIN. SORRY ABOUT THAT, BUT YOU UNDERSTAND.
RIGHT. SO THIS IS IT THEN. THE LAB. OH, CAN YOU FEEL IT? THE EUREKA MOMENT APPROACHING?!
ALL'S I FEEL IS A HEADACHE BREWING--
PREPARE, PEOPLE. THIS IS THE DAY TINI SUNDOWN MAKES HER MARK...
GRANDPA? I FOUND SOMETHING--
DID SOME MAMBO MAMA DROP YOU ON YOUR HEAD AS A KITTEN?! YOU'RE CRACKED, KID!
BUT GRANDPA...
WE KEEP IT ON THE LOW KEY BECAUSE WE DO NOT WANT STATIC, TINI!
SALUTATIONS... TEA AND BISCUITS?
WE GOT JOKERS AT THE GATE LOOKING TO PUT THE BIG SLEEP ON US. SO YOU WHACK THE BIG GAT AND THEN DRAG STRAY CATS BACK TO THE HOMESTEAD?
HE SAID HE'S VEXED THAT THE GIRL BROUGHT US HOME, AS THEY'VE BEEN HAVING TROUBLE WITH STRANGERS IN THE NEIGHBOR-HOOD.
CHOMP

WHAT CAN I SAY? I SPEAK JIVE.
YOUR MIND IS ALWAYS HOPSCOTCHING IT OFF SOMEWHERE NON-LOCAL, GIRL!
WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO LEARN TO BE IN THE MOMENT?
BUT GRANDPA...
PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT STANDS IN FRONT OF YOU INSTEAD OF--
GRANDPA!
LOOK.
NIXON? GADS...YOU WOULDN'T HAVE HIS KEY. LAST HE... WAS ON ICE.
GOOD MAN, NIXON. A COOL AMONG SQUARES.
THE BOY TOLD ME NIXON... THOUGHT YOU COULD HELP ME.
THE TWO OF US... WE WERE GOING TO CHANGE THE WORLD. YOUNG AND PRETTY, MEN WITH MEANS...
...NOW WE ARE A GHOST AND A MAD SCIENTIST.
YOU DID IT YOUR WAY, BABY. HERE'S TO YA.
THIS WAS A MISTAKE.
NO! WAIT. SHOW HIM WHAT YOU SHOWED ME
...
PFFBT
TINI... GET MY GOOD EXAM COAT. RED VELVET, LEOPARD TRIM.
WE'RE COOKIN' WITH GAS.
OF COURSE, GRANDPA.

GREAT GREAT GRANDFATHER HIRAM SUNDOWN WAS, AS THE TERM HAS BEEN COINED, A "GENIUS." WAY BEYOND HIS TIME, LIKE INTO THE STRATOSPHERE--
BACK THEN, SUNDOWNS WERE THE BEES KNEES. THE LAST WORD IN THE MECHANICAL SCIENCES--
--NOT HIDING IN A DUMP HEAP OUTSIDE OF LONDON FIGHTING OFF MAMBUTU'S SCAVENGERS AND--
GRANDPA, PLEASE...
RIGHT. -SIGH- SO HIRAM'S LIVING THE HIGH LIFE AROUND LONDON UNTIL 'BOUT THE 1730s WHEN POOF.
"POOF?"
GONESVILLE.
"GONESV--"
HE DISAPPEARED. HASN'T BEEN A TRACE OF HIM FOR OVER A HUNDRED YEARS--
AND YOU KNOW HOW THINGS GOT FOR BRAINIAC CATS ONCE THE ABSINTHES STARTED IN. ALL SCIENTISTS WENT UNDERGROUND. FAR UNDER.
SO GREAT GREAT HIRAM BECAME LEGEND STUFF... UNTIL TODAY.
HIP DADDY DREW UP A DESIGN FOR A MECHANICAL APPENDAGE ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO AS A LARK.
TODAY, THAT ARM TORE APART MY FIELD GUARD AN' NEARLY KILLED MY GRANDDAUGHTER.
WELCOME TO THE FAMILY, BOY. YER SPORTING AN ORIGINAL MECHANICA SUNDOWN.
...
SO THE TWENTY-THOUSAND POUND QUESTIONS, FRIEND, ARE THUS...
HOW IN BLAZES DID IT WIND UP ATTACHED TO A TUMBLER LIKE YOU? HOW DID YOU KEEP IT SUCH FINE CONDITION...?


"...AND WHY DID NIXON SEND YOU TO ME NOW?"
AYE LAD, 'TIS A TERROR, I KEN BUT LAY IN REST WITH FAITH AND HIGH SPIRITS, IF SPIRITS AT ALL YE STILL POSSESS...
ON THE GOOD NAME OF SUNDOWN, I SWEAR... I SHALL RETURN FOR YE...
WHEN IT'S SAFE... YE SHALL WALK AGAIN AMONG MEN.
BUT HE DID NAE RETURN...
HE LEFT ME... IN THE DARK... HE LEFT ME!

THERE IS A DANSE CELESTIAL THAT NEVER ENDS, A PIROUETTE SPIRALING FOR INFINITY 'TWIXT SUN AND MOON, THE WIND AND THE SEA, THE BLOOD AND THE HEART...
'TWEEN SUCH PARTNERS AS THESE, THERE IS A SPACE. SLIGHT, TENDER, BUT TAUT WITH SECRETS.
VELVET CHAINS OF SHROUDED SILENT SONG.
'TWIXT SUCH BODIES IN MOTION, THIS BOND IS THEIR LIFEBEAT. INVIOLATE. UNKNOWABLE...
...EVEN TO MY MASTER.
CHILDREN OF MY MIGHT. WIND OF MY BLOOD, HEAR THE CALL...FEEL THE WORLD SPIN AS YOUR FATHER WEAVES YOUR SONG...
...AND REACH OUT TO ME.
REACH OUT TO ME.
TO ME.

STRANGENESS AFOOT IN THIS PLACE, SAY WE. STRANGE PEOPLE WITH STRANGER TOYS--
--AN' THAT WEE ONE! WE ARE FAR FROM PRIGGISH, BUT CERTAINLY SHE'S NOT DRESSED FOR THE RIGORS OF SCIENCE, EH? LASLO?
WHAT'S WRONG? TRYING TO CATCH THE WIND WITH A SLACK JAW?
YOU HEAR SOMETHING?
SOMETHING SWEET AND SICK... LIKE TOO MUCH SUGAR AND TAR?
NO!!
WHA-AIIGH!
CRUNCH
LOOK INTO OUR EYES, BOY, AND HEAR US. HEAR US WITH ALL YER FEEBLE MIND--
YOU. HEARD. NOTHING.
IF THIS IS A PROBLEM, WE SHALL LOP OFF YOUR EARS AND REMEDY ALL.
WH-WHAT HAVE I DONE... TO MAKE YOU HATE ME?
... YOU LIVED--
LADY VICKY! LADY VICKY! PUT A SHAKE IN YER CRANKHOUSE!
E'S GONE MENTAL!

HE LEFT ME!!
AND I-- I--
NO MORE! NO MORE!!
SALUTATIONS... TEA AND BISCUITS?
CHRIST... MEAT.
NOTHING BUT MEAT AN' STEEL.
ABSINTHE. WHAT DEVIL'S BOX HATH YE OPENED?
I DON'T WANT THIS!
URK!
SWAK
NOR DO WE, GENTLE SIR.

SO WE SUGGESTS YOU CURB YOUR TEMPER WITH CIVILITY--
-- FOR WE ARE OF A HUMOR THAT WILL SURELY LEAD TO BLOOD, ELSEWISE.
WHAT SAY YE, BLAQUESMITH? WHERE ARE YOUR MANNERS?
WHERE IS MY ENGINE, SAVAGE?
WHERE IS MY ENGINE?!?
DAMN YOU AND YOUR ENGINE BOTH TO HELL!!
THAT TEARS IT. THE BLIGHTER'S GONE BATTY, AN' THAT PUTS OUR FISCAL FUTURE AT RISK.
COME ON, QUEENY. ONE HUNDRED YEARS IN THE DIRT, YE 'AVE T'SPECT A FEW TWEAKY BITS!
ASIDE FROM THE RUST AND THE AMNESIA, E'S DONE A SMASHING JOB SO FAR--
SMASHING MY LAB! TIN!
WAIT! I HAVE AN IDEA--
WHAT, TO GET THAT PRETTY FACE KNOCKED IN? LET'S MOVE--
YOU THINK I'M PRETTY?
WELL... YES, SURE--FOR A COUNTRY GIRL--
GUESS WHAT...I'M SMARTER THAN I AM GOOD LOOKING, SO HELP ME SAVE GRANDAD'S LAB, AND MAYBE I'LL GIVE YOU A KISS.

NOT THIS... I DON'T WANT TO SEE...
FIONA?
FIONA, YE STOPPED COUGHING? ARE YE WELL, NOW? FIONA?
NO.
NO.

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ME.
EASY... EASY...
DAFT SLUM, WHAT'S SHE AT?
TIN!! NO!
KEY IN A LOCK. DONE IT A MILLION TIMES--
WE ARE NOT AMUSED--
HUH?
CHAK
THE ENGINE.
YE CUT OUT MY HEART, YE BASTARD...
NOW, I TAKE YOURS.

A HAIR MORE..
TAK
HNNGH!
AAH!
THUMP
TIN!
OH!
THIS IS THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF COOL. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?
THE KEY THE KEY--
THAK
THAK
THAK
THAK
SALUTATIONS... TEA AND BISCU--
AWAY! AWAY!!
KRUNCH
UCENIC AL DIAVOL.
STUDENT OF THE DEVIL.
CHUNK
PKSHH
THUNK

MEAT... AND STEEL...
...STILL A MONSTER MAKES.
I KNOW WHAT TO DO.

I KNOW--
...
KRANCH
"THE KEY." SURE. EASY. I SHOULD LET YOU BOSS ME AROUND MORE OFTEN.
TH-THANKS... IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME... I'M GOING TO DISGORGE NOW.
WHAT IN THE NAME OF MOSES ON A POGO STICK WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?
DID 'E SAY 'E KNEW WHAT TO DO? KNEW WHAT?
'AVE YE 'ALF AN INKLE, MISS VICKY?
WELL, BEFORE YOU DO... I THINK WE HAD A BARGAIN.
WE CAN ONLY IMAGINE, RANDY...
THAT IT BODES NOT WELL...
OF COURSE WE DID.
NOT WELL AT ALL.
HSSKKT
"AND I SAID TO HIM... YOU TOOK MY HEART...
"...I'LL TAKE YOURS.

TO BE CONTINUED...

CLIFFHANGER!
STEAMPUNK
#8 JUL
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BUILDING BLOCKS.
BLOCKS.
SIMPLE TOYS FOR SIMPLE BOYS--
AND THEIR FALLEN MAIDS. FORGET THEE NOT THE FALLEN MAID!
NAE, ME THE SECOND... NE'ER FORGET THE MAID, WITH SKIN OF ASH AND EYES CAVED IN--
--BURIED 'NEATH A RINGED SKY. HER BEAU TOO MUCH THE COWARD TO DIE.
COLE.

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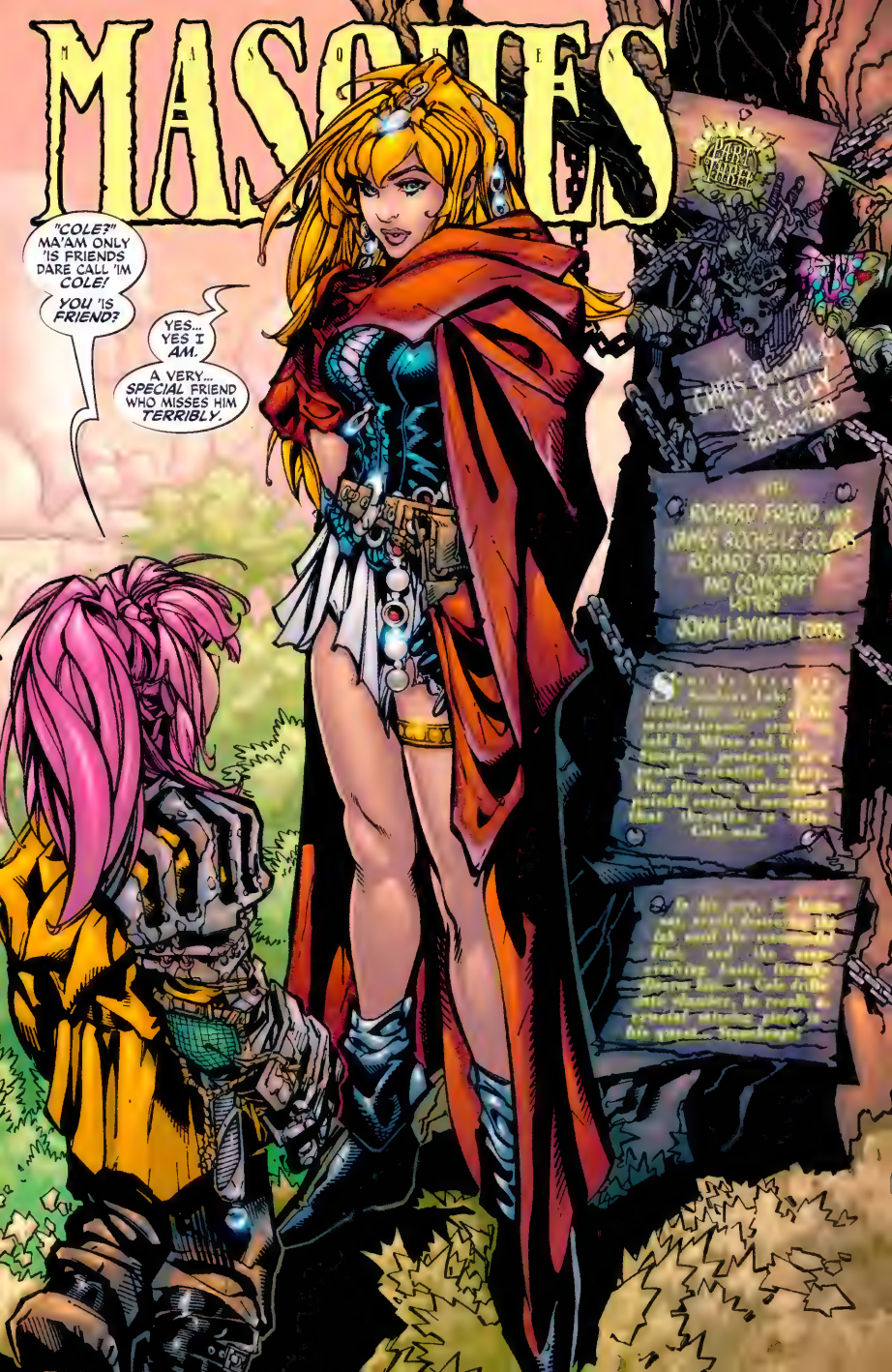
HURRY.
FIND ME... 'TIS SO DARK, AND I CANNOT BREATHE IN HERE.
I CAN'T BREATHE.
I CAN'T --
NO!

NO...
Dearest Journal, something electric has happened to me... something incontestable.
Like the peasants who once believed flies grew from meat, I feel as if... life has magically germinated within the sanitary coffin grandfather has created here at Sundown Labs.
I met a young man with curious prospects. A traveler with a past. Dreadfully shy... but brave. Oh, so brave--
DON'T FORGET A LOOKER, HIP, LAYS DOWN A WICKED BEAT--
YOU THINK SO, LASLO? YOU THINK THAT'S WHAT I WROTE?
DIDN'T I TELL YOU? I GOT THE BYE. SECOND SIGHT. KNOWS ALL, SEES ALL, DIG?
THERE'S NO SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE WHATSOEVER TO SUPPORT THE MYTH OF PRECOGNIZANCE.
YEAH? WATCH... I SEE... YOU AND A DARK-SKINNED CAT CAUGHT UP IN SOMETHING BIG. MYSTERY. ADVENTURE... SOMETHING THAT SHAKES THE EARTH--
Oh, REALLY?
AND WHAT WOULD YOUR "EYE" SAY IF I TOLD YOU THAT THE NEXT SENTENCE HAD THE MAN'S NAME... AND IT WASN'T YOURS?
THEN I'LL JUST HAVE TO SWEEP YOU OFF THOSE FINE STEMS AND MAKE IT SO!
HA HA! PISH PISH! I HAVE NO TIME FOR YOU CHARLATANS WHEN MY TRUE DESIRE AWAITS...
A WRITER... THE BOY HAS GOOD TASTE.

I CAN'T... I...
"YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO GET USED TO IT SOMETIME, BOY..."
WE ALL HAVE SCARS. OWN THEM...
...OR THEY OWN YOU.
THUNK
REESH
AYE, VICTORIA... WE ALL HAVE SCARS. AND NOW...
...I OWN MINE.
I'LL NO LONGER BE AN ENEMY TO MYSELF.
I'M COMING FOR YOU, FIONA.

COME NO FURTHER, DOGS, LEST YOU FEEL THE STING OF COLD STEEL--
--SO SAYETH COLE BLAQUESMITH!
WHY DO YE GET TO BE BLAQUESMITH AGAIN, IZZY?! DON'T YOU EVER GET TIRED OF BEING HIM?
NOT TO MENTION YOU'RE A NANCY, FOR PETE'S SAKE!
SHUT UP, FRANCIS.
GET HER-- I MEAN HIM!
NEVER! COLE BLAQUESMITH BOWS TO NO -- AHH!
OOF!
SORRYSORRYSORRY, MA'AM, I--
EASY CHILD, NO HARM DONE...
BESIDES, I COULD NEVER TAKE UMBRAGE AGAINST SUCH A NOBLE KNIGHT! YOU ARE A KNIGHT, YES?
E'EN BETTER, M'LADY! WHY I'M COLE BLAQUESMITH!
TH' HERO OF THE UNDERDWELLERS AN' SCOURGE O' ABSINTHE --
--WHAT WAS HERE JUST TWO DAYS PAST!
TWO DAYS?
OH, COLE...

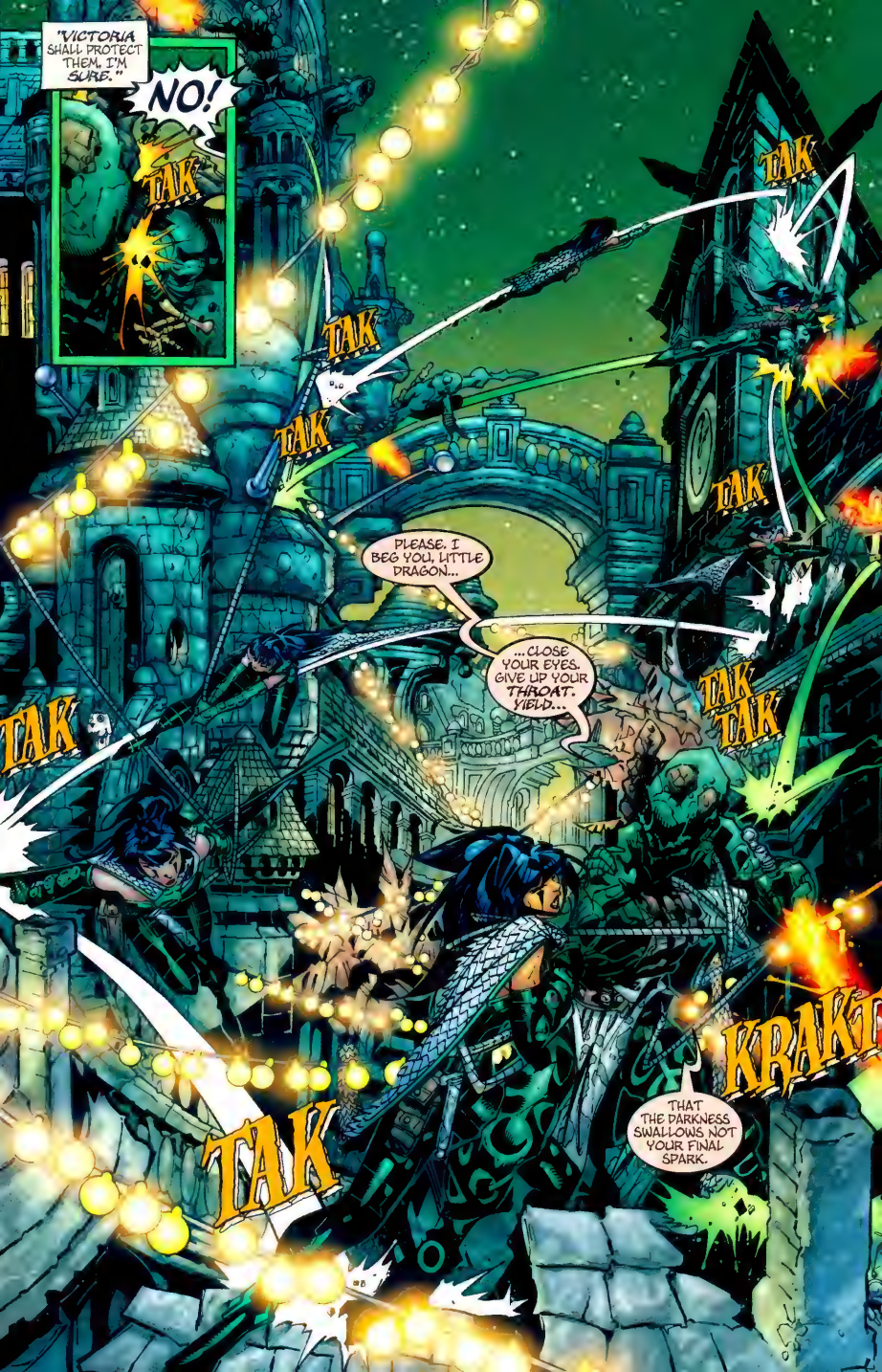

MASQUES
"COLE?" MA'AM ONLY 'IS FRIENDS DARE CALL 'IM COLE!
YOU 'IS FRIEND?
YES... YES I AM.
A VERY... SPECIAL FRIEND WHO MISSES HIM TERRIBLY.
A CHRIS BRUNELL JOE KELLY PRODUCTION
WITH RICHARD FRIEND INKS JAMES ROCHELLE COLOR RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT LETTERS
JOHN LAYMAN EDITOR

WAX SCRATCH JOURNAL, MILTON SUNDOWN...
DAMN, GRANDDADDY... YOU DID IT. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU DID, BUT --
-- IF I HAVE IT FIGURED RIGHT, YOU HELPED A MAN DO TIME IN SUB ZERO FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY, AN' HE POPPED OUT WITH A MAD ON FOR YOUR TROUBLE.
THAT'S BALLS, PAPS. BALLS.
THING IS, I'VE LOOKED AT THE PLANS... I DIG THE MECHANICS, BUT WHAT I CAN'T CRACK IS --
YOU DON'T SURVIVE A THING LIKE THIS ON FUEL AND OIL ALONE. YOU NEED HEART.
A HEART YOU SWAPPED FOR A COAL FURNACE...
SWIFF
FLIP FLAP FLIP
WHAT'S IN A MAN THAT DRIVES HIM TO LIVE UNDER THAT WEIGHT? WHAT PUSHES US ON -- MOTIVATES US TO SEE A HORROR THROUGH TO THE GOOD END?
HOW DO WE DECIDE TO SURVIVE?
WE DETEST LIES AND SPIES. SO ANSWER IN TRUTH, BATCAT --
WHERE IS YOUR MASTER --?
HE'S GONE! IT'S GONE!
WHA -- WHO'S GONE?
BLAQUESMITH!
HE... HE DID IT? HE LEFT US...
HE LEFT... ME?
AND THUSLY, THE WORLD SHIFTS, YET AGAIN.

FLAP
FLIP FLAP
FAUST?
WHAT A PREDICAMENT THIS IS, MILADY...
...WHAT A PREDICAMENT.

METHINKS THE LADY WILL BE ... "NOT AMUSED."
I'M SORRY. SORRY TO YOU ALL... ...BUT THE PATH IS CLEAR, AND IT IS MY OWN.
'TIS SPARE COMFORT TO BE SURE, BUT SHOULD I MANAGE STRENGTH TO DO WHAT MUST BE DONE...
...I PROMISE... NOT A ONE OF YE WILL MIND THIS A BIT --
???
CHAKKA CHAKKA CHAK
AYE, LADS. THERE'S THE PLACE WHAT LIVES THE FILCHERS AN' SKINFLINTIES!

SUNDOWN LABS. BRAINY GITS DON'T WANT TO PAY THE TITHE TO X.
BEEN ASKED TWICE, SO WE ASK THRICE, AND WHEN THEY SAY NAY...
...ICE.
...
NO.
'TIS NO CONCERN OF MINE. I SHANT STRAY FROM THE PATH, FIONA... NE'ER AGAIN. BESIDES...


"VICTORIA SHALL PROTECT THEM. I'M SURE."
NO!
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
PLEASE. I BEG YOU, LITTLE DRAGON...
...CLOSE YOUR EYES. GIVE UP YOUR THROAT. YIELD...
KRAK
THAT THE DARKNESS SWALLOWS NOT YOUR FINAL SPARK.

DID WE DO SOMETHIN'? DIDN'T WE DO SOMETHIN'? I DON'T... I THOUGHT WE WAS MATES.
SERVES YOU RIGHT FOR THINKING, RANDY! GOOD RIDDANCE, SAY I! MAYBE NOW WE CAN GET BACK TO LIVING!
THERE WAS SO MUCH TO LEARN... SO MUCH I COULD HAVE TAUGHT HIM --
TEA AND GREET--SKITS-- ZZT BISCUITS AND GREET? --ZZT--
DID HE COME ALL THIS WAY... SIMPLY TO LEAVE? HOW WELL DID YOU KNOW THIS MAN, LASLO?
LASLO?
DECENIC A DIAVOL...
WHAT?
DO YOU HEAR SOMETHING? SOUNDS LIKE... MUSIC --
CHAOS

ARE YOU ALRIGHT? TIN! --?
SO... WHO HERE WRITES THE CHECKS?
FOR YOU'LL BE THE LAST TO GET DECKED!
YOU'VE LIVED UNDER OUR PROTECTION, BEYOND ABSINTHE'S DETECTION. THAT SAFETY COSTS --
PAY UP, OR ALL IS LOST.
HE'S THE BRAWN OF THE OPERATION. YOU WANT PURSE STRINGS, CHECK OUT HIS BLOOMERS.
HOW QUICKLY THEY TURN. FASTER THAN A TOP, YOU. MAN WANTS TO STAY ALIVE, A MAN NEEDS FRIENDS--
HNNGH!
STOP.
AN' I GOT FRIENDS. GREAT HIBBITY DIBBITY, DO I GOT FRIENDS!
KRVVVF
CHOOM CHOOM
CHOOM CHOOM
THAK

BOOM BOOM BOOM
A HERO TO HURT, A HERO TO BLEED --
-- 'ZACTLY WHAT THIS PARTY NEEDS.
RUN, TINI -- OUT THE BACK TRAP. THERE'S A BIKE --
LASLO --?
NO!
GIRL FOCUS! WE NEED TO PULL EVAC NOW AND GET YOU SAFE.
BLAKKT
HRRGH!
WE CAN'T RUN AWAY FROM THIS! THIS -- THIS IS US -- OUR SCIENCE AT WORK!
WE NEED TO PROTECT IT!
YOU'RE A SCIENTIST, GIRL! WHAT KNOW YOU OF FIGHT--
I KNOW WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY, SPECIFICALLY TO THAT MAN -- FOR WHAT HIRAM DID TO HIM --
?
--AND I FOR ONE INTEND TO PAY UP!
THAK
TAK
LADY VICK!! HELLLLP! WE'RE NECK DEEP IN KNEEKNOCKERS!
WHERE IS THAT HIGH-BROW HUSSY? I DECLARE, THE CLASS OF FOLK YOU INTRODUCE ME TO --
?!?
WOOMP
SKÖM, MEET BLOODTHIRSTY MONGREL.
MONGREL... MEET THE FEATHER DUSTER.
TOK
RRRGH!
WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE? HALF MAN HALF MACHINE -- WITH HALF THE FEAR.
WONDER IF YOU CN MAKE ME RICH FASTER THAN AN' OL' SCIENTIST AND HIS L'IL --
DON'T EVEN THINK IT, SPARKY!
AGGH!
ACID, DOG... AN' NOT THE FUN KIND.
LEAST, NOT FOR YOU!
NOW YOU'VE GONE AND CALLED MY RAGE...
TINI -- GCH-GET OUT --
NO. I'M HERE FOR THE DURATION, BETTER OR WORSE --
-- AND LIKE I SAID BEFORE...
...I'M SMART.
TCHAKK
?!?
TCHAKK
I WONDER... DOES SKIN TASTE BETTER WITH AGE?
ULP!
THAP
THAK
BLAM

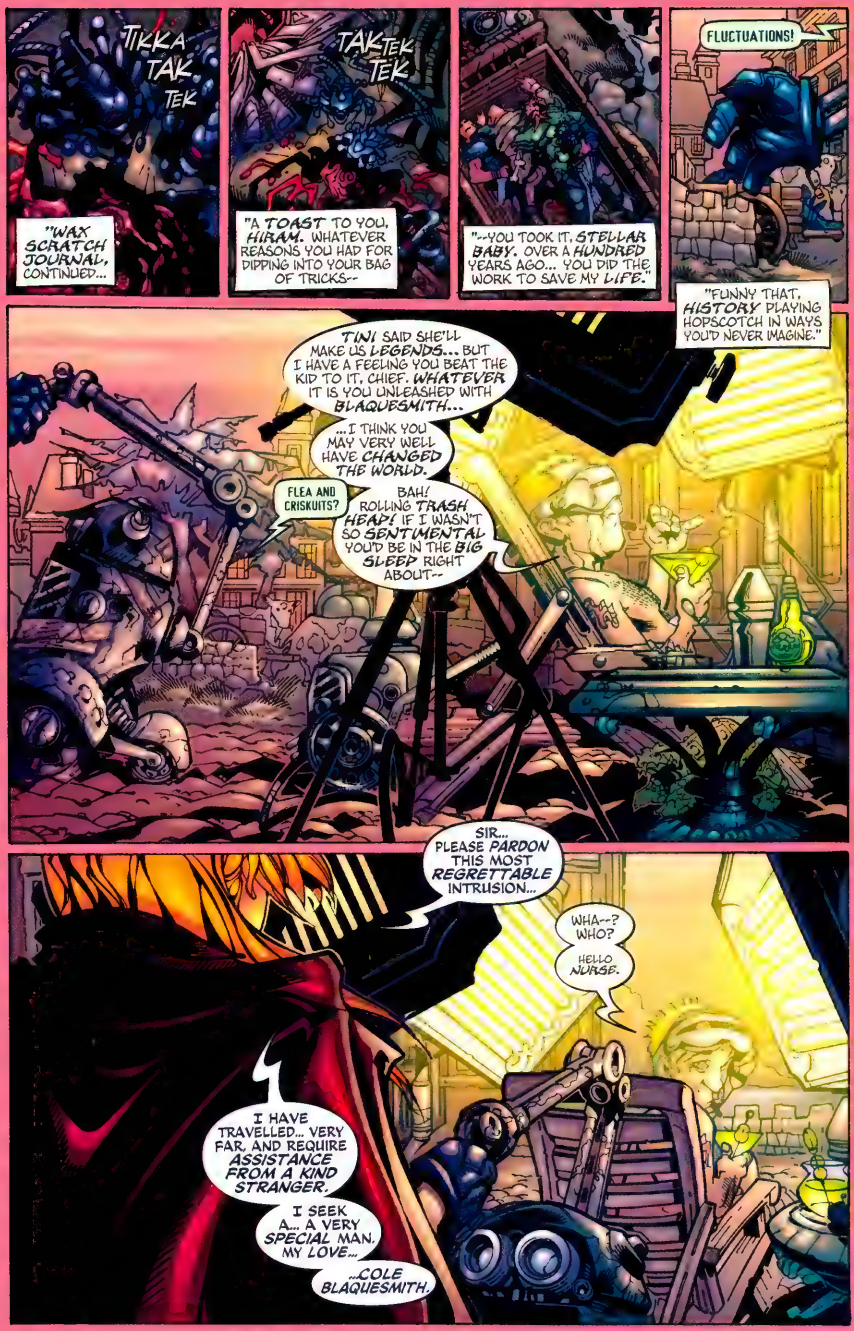
...
I STILL HAVE A FACE.
ZOWEE.
WHO --?
THUMMP
ME... SOMEHOW --
YOU AND PARANOID GREAT GREAT GRANDFATHER HIRAM.
HEH... MAYBE WE SUNDOWNS DO KNOW A BIT OR TWO ABOUT FISTICUFFS.
RIGHT, THEN! WHO'S NEXT --?!

THE CAVALRY HAS ARRIVED, IF NOT FASHIONABLY LATE!
YE CAME BACK! KNEW IT, I DID!
KNEW YE COULDN'T JUST TAKE FRGET-ME-NOTS AN' HIT THE ROAD!
THE LITTLE SLAD 'ADDY FAMILY'S GOT A 'OLD OF YE!
ONE CRAZY FAMILY.

...
I KNOW I HAVE NO RIGHT T'ASK... BUT PLEASE...
...LET THIS BE NO WORSE A MISTAKE THAN THE REST.
HOW FAR AWAY IS STONEHENGE?
IN THIS? YOU WON'T EVEN HAVE TIME FOR A SNUGGLE WITH WHAT'S 'ER NAME.
I'LL MAKE TIME, RATMAN... YOU JUST WATCH.
PROMISE THAT YOU'LL STUDY, AND NEVER TAKE A SHAKEN MARTINI... AND THAT YOU'LL HIT THE END OF THE DRIVE AND TURN AROUND IMMEDIATELY AND SCOOT BACK TO ME --
GRANDPA... IT'S TIME. WHAT GOOD IS KNOWLEDGE IF WE HIDE FROM IT? WHAT VALUE DOES MY TRAINING HAVE LOCKED AWAY IN HIDING?
IT'S TIME FOR A SUNDOWN TO WALK THE EARTH.
I KNOW YOU'LL MAKE ME PROUD, KITTEN, SO I WON'T EVEN SAY IT.
I'LL DO BETTER... I'LL MAKE US LEGENDS.
THEY DON'T LET LADIES ON SHIPS --
AN' WHAT ABOUT MISS VICKI? TRUST ME, SHE'S GOT THE EQUIPMENT --
BUT SHE SURE AIN'T NO LADY!
WORD IS BOND.
MISS VICTORIA?

ALL ASHORE WHAT'S GOIN' ASHORE.
SO SOON. YOU'RE A MAN OF EFFICIENCY --
-- WHEN YOU'RE NOT PONCYING ABOUT, IN AN IRISH FIT OF SORROW, MISTER BLAQUESMITH.
AYE. CAN BE.
ARE YE COMING WITH?
DEPENDS...
WHY DID YOU RETURN?
MAYBE... I KNOW I CAN USE THE HELP.
MAYBE, WE GROUP HAVE MORE IN COMMON... THAN JUST SCARS.
OR MAYBE, AFTER A HUNDRED YEARS IN THE GROUND, I KNOW... I DO NOT WANT TO BE ALONE.
WILL THE LADY BE JOWING US THEN, OR NO?
...
AYE. WE SHOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO ACCOMPANY YOU ON A FOOL'S QUEST, MISTER BLAQUESMITH.
GOD HELP US BOTH.
NO. NOT GOD.
WE WILL HELP EACH OTHER.
RIGHT. WE GO.
RIGHT.
GOD HELP US.
IS THIS HOW YOU PLANNED IT, LITTLE DRAGON?

WAS THIS THE WARRIOR'S DEATH YOU TRAINED FOR UNDER MY WING?
KNEES. THROAT... MY BLADE? WHAT HAS THAT MAN DONE TO YOU?
BLAQUESMITH... BLAQUESMITH HAS SHOWN ME THE KEY --
-- THE KEY TO MY FREEDOM. AND I MEAN TO TAKE IT FROM HIM.
HE'S ALREADY GIVEN YOU YOUR FREEDOM, AND YOU TOOK IT --
DO YOU THINK ME SUCH A FOOL, FAUST? WHAT GOOD IS FREEDOM IN ENGLAND, WHERE ABE'S SHADOW COVERS ALL?
WHAT GOOD IS IT WHEN YOU ARE HIS RIGHT HAND? I KNEW YOU WOULD FIND ME...
I HAD ONLY HOPED YOU WOULD NOT DO SO UNTIL I'D FOUND OUR MASTER'S PRIZE. THE ENGINE.
ABSINTHE THINKS ME A TRAITOR. THIS WAS NECESSARY FOR BLAQUESMITH TO BELIEVE IT AS WELL.
BLAQUESMITH THINKS NOTHING OF YOU. HE'S GONE HIS OWN WAY --
HE TRUSTS ME, AND BY MY BLOOD -- HE'LL BE BACK.
WHEN HE RETURNS, HE'LL LEAD ME TO ABE'S PRECIOUS ENGINE, AND WHEN HE DOES --
-- I'LL DRAG THEM BOTH TO LONDON -- AND WITH THEM, I WILL WIN MY FREEDOM.
...
THIS... THIS IS DESPERATE TRICKERY--
LOOK INTO MY HEART, FAUST. TELL ME TOWARDS WHOM MY TREACHERY IS AIMED...
...AND STRIKE ME DEAD IF I'VE SAID NOT THE TRUTH.


TIKKA TAK. TEK
"WAX SCRATCH JOURNAL, CONTINUED...
TAK TEK TEK
"A TOAST TO YOU, HIRAM. WHATEVER REASONS YOU HAD FOR DIPPING INTO YOUR BAG OF TRICKS--
"--YOU TOOK IT. STELLAR BABY. OVER A HUNDRED YEARS AGO... YOU DID THE WORK TO SAVE MY LIFE."
FLUCTUATIONS!
"FUNNY THAT, HISTORY PLAYING HOPSCOTCH IN WAYS YOU'D NEVER IMAGINE."
TINI SAID SHE'LL MAKE US LEGENDS... BUT I HAVE A FEELING YOU BEAT THE KID TO IT, CHIEF. WHATEVER IT IS YOU UNLEASHED WITH BLAQUESMITH...
...I THINK YOU MAY VERY WELL HAVE CHANGED THE WORLD.
FLEA AND CRISKUITS?
BAH! ROLLING TRASH HEAP! IF I WASN'T SO SENTIMENTAL YOU'D BE IN THE BIG SLEEP RIGHT ABOUT--
SIR... PLEASE PARDON THIS MOST REGRETTABLE INTRUSION...
WHA--? WHO?
HELLO NURSE.
I HAVE TRAVELLED... VERY FAR, AND REQUIRE ASSISTANCE FROM A KIND STRANGER.
I SEEK A... A VERY SPECIAL MAN. MY LOVE...
...COLE BLAQUESMITH.

I KNOW... YOU HAVE QUESTIONS.
YOU SHOULD.
WHY STONEHENGE? WHAT WAITS? HOW CAN IT HURT ABSINTHE?
LEVER ON THE LEFT. JUST A SHORT DISTANCE NOW.
ON IT, BABE.
THE TELLING OF TRUTH CAN BE... DIFFICULT AT TIMES... BUT IT ALWAYS COMES TO THE FORE.
SO I ASK ONLY YOUR PATIENCE UNTIL WE REACH STONEHENGE.
IN THAT SMALL PLACE. THAT SPECIAL PLACE... I WILL EXPLAIN ALL --
BOSS?
WE MAY BE IN THE DARK FOR A WHILE THERE.
THIS -- THIS CAN'T BE. THE MAP MUST BE WRONG!
WHAT -- WHAT IS THAT?
IT'S EXACTLY WHERE WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE. EXACTLY WHERE STONEHENGE IS SUPPOSED TO BE.

NEXT...X

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"I MADE A PROMISE TO YE... THAT ONCE WE'D REACHED STONEHENGE... I'D TELL WHAT MADNESS WE WERE UP TO.
"HERE WE ARE... AND STONEHENGE ISN'T WHERE IT ONCE WAS. IT'S GONE.
"BUT I DON'T STAND FOR MEN WHO BREAK A PROMISE, EVEN WHEN THE WORLD PLAYS THEM FOR FOOLS.
"SO I WILL TELL ALL."
DOOOMDOOOMDOOO

"OVER ONE HUNDRED YEARS PAST... I KNEW A MAN CALLED ABSINTHE. A WRETCHED TWIST WHO, BY HOOK OR CROOK, HAD GOT HIMSELF A WEAPON.
"CALLED IT "THE ENGINE."
"USING IT, HE UPSET THE NATURAL BALANCE OF THINGS. MUCKED ABOUT WITH FATE AND SECURED A SEAT IN HISTORY.
DOOOMDOOOMDOOOMDOOOMDOOOMDOO
"I TRIED TO STOP HIM, BUT... FAILED... AND PAID A DEAR PRICE FOR MY FOLLY.
"I DID MANAGE TO HIDE THE ENGINE FROM HIM, THOUGH, HERE... WHEN IT WAS STILL THERE.
"WITH HIS ENGINE, ABSINTHE CHANGED THE WORLD.
"WE FIND IT... WE WILL DO THE SAME. WE WILL CRIPPLE ABSINTHE. WE WILL TEAR DOWN HIS EMPIRE. WE WILL UTTERLY AND COMPLETELY BREAK HIM. GOD AS MY WITNESS...

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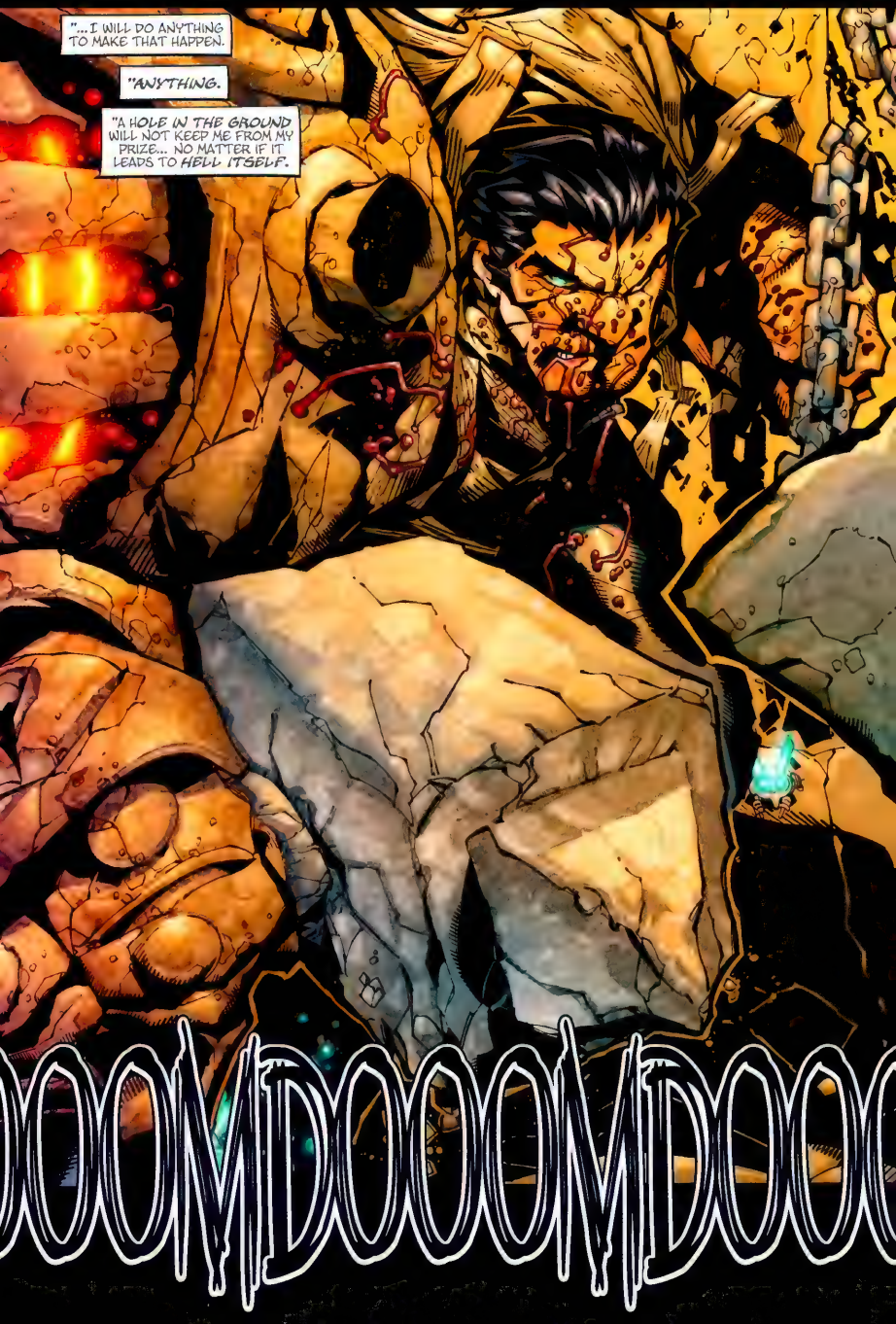
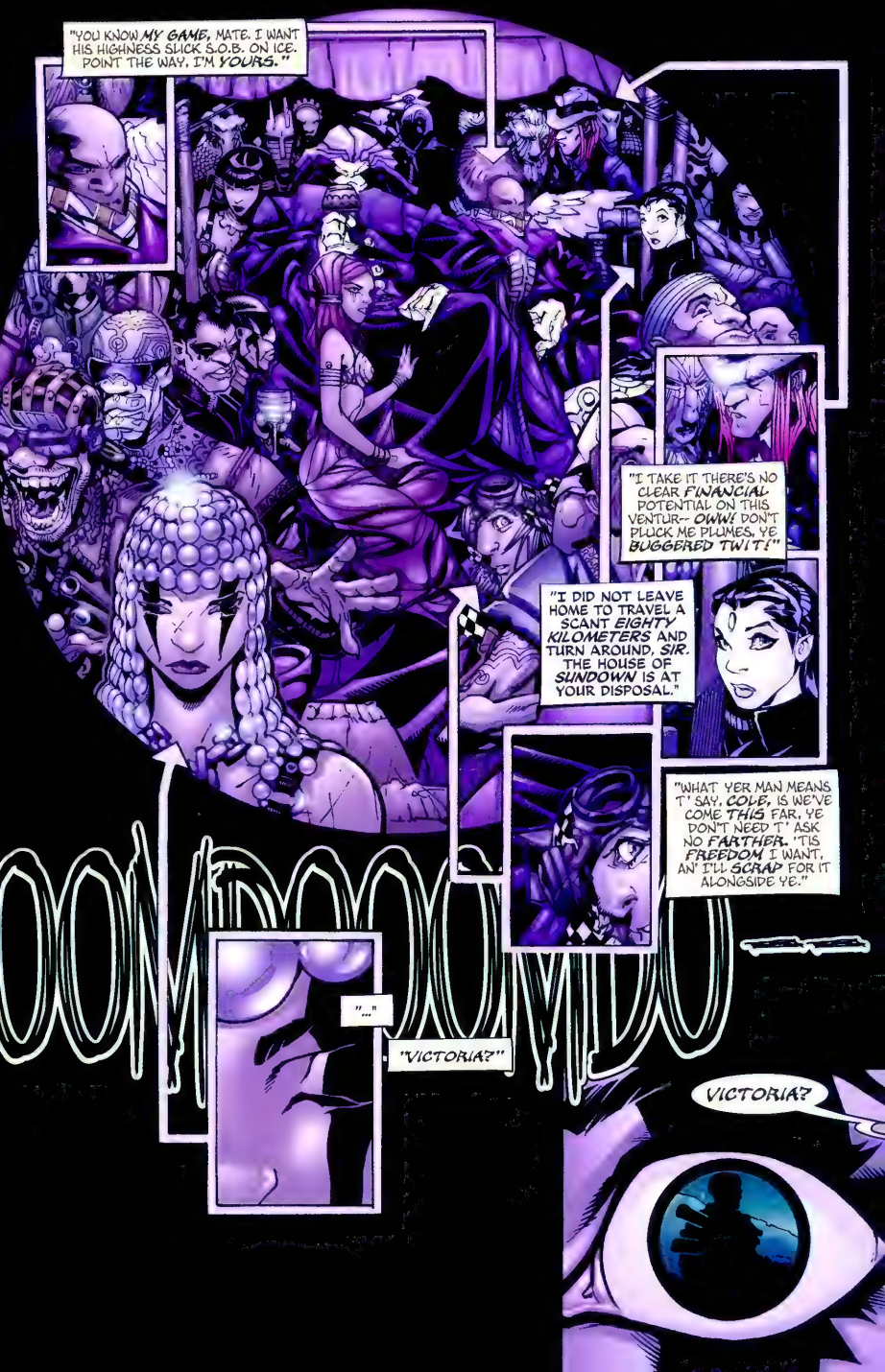

"...I WILL DO ANYTHING TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN.
"ANYTHING.
"A HOLE IN THE GROUND WILL NOT KEEP ME FROM MY PRIZE... NO MATTER IF IT LEADS TO HELL ITSELF.
DOOMDOOMDOO

"EACH OF YOU, IN HIS WAY, HAS COMMITTED TO THIS JOURNEY, AND I, GOD HELP ME...
"...HAVE COMMITTED TO LEAD.
KRAK
"ASK ME, NOT A ONE OF YOU IS RIGHT IN THE HEAD. BUT WHAT BETTER AN ARMY FOR A MAN OF HALF A BODY?
KRAK
"...JOINING ME ON THIS... QUEST, HAS PUT ME IN YOUR DEBT. SO I PLEDGE MYSELF TO YOU--
"--PARTS HUMAN AND OTHERWISE.
"RUST AND BLOOD."

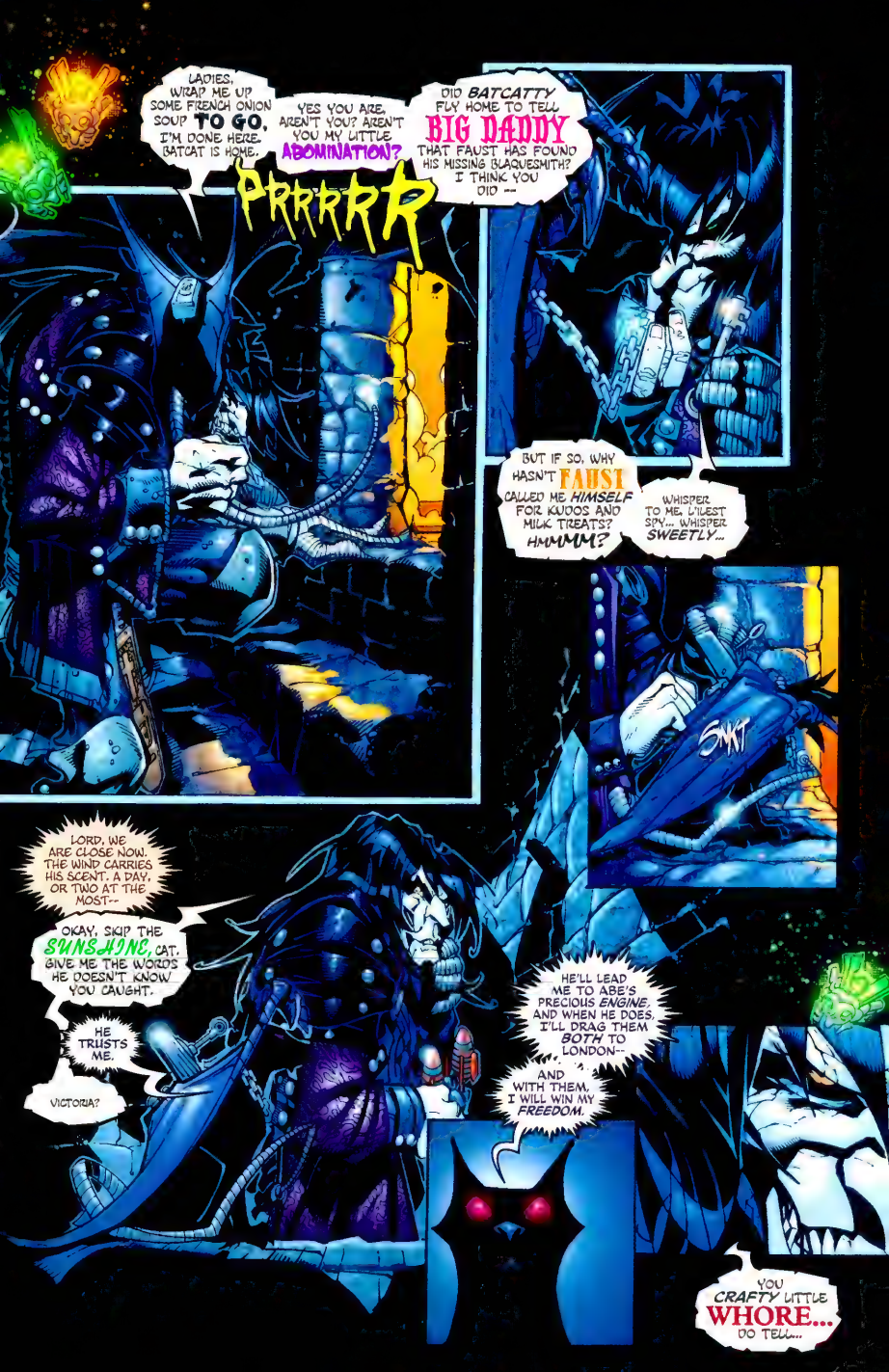

"YOU KNOW MY GAME, MATE. I WANT HIS HIGHNESS SLICK S.O.B. ON ICE. POINT THE WAY, I'M YOURS."
"I TAKE IT THERE'S NO CLEAR FINANCIAL POTENTIAL ON THIS VENTUR-- OWW! DON'T PLUCK ME PLUMES, YE BUGGERED TWIT!"
"I DID NOT LEAVE HOME TO TRAVEL A SCANT EIGHTY KILOMETERS AND TURN AROUND, SIR. THE HOUSE OF SUNDOWN IS AT YOUR DISPOSAL."
"WHAT YER MAN MEANS T' SAY, COLE, IS WE'VE COME THIS FAR, YE DON'T NEED T' ASK NO FARTHER. 'TIS FREEDOM I WANT, AN' I'LL SCRAP FOR IT ALONGSIDE YE."
"..."
"VICTORIA?"
VICTORIA?

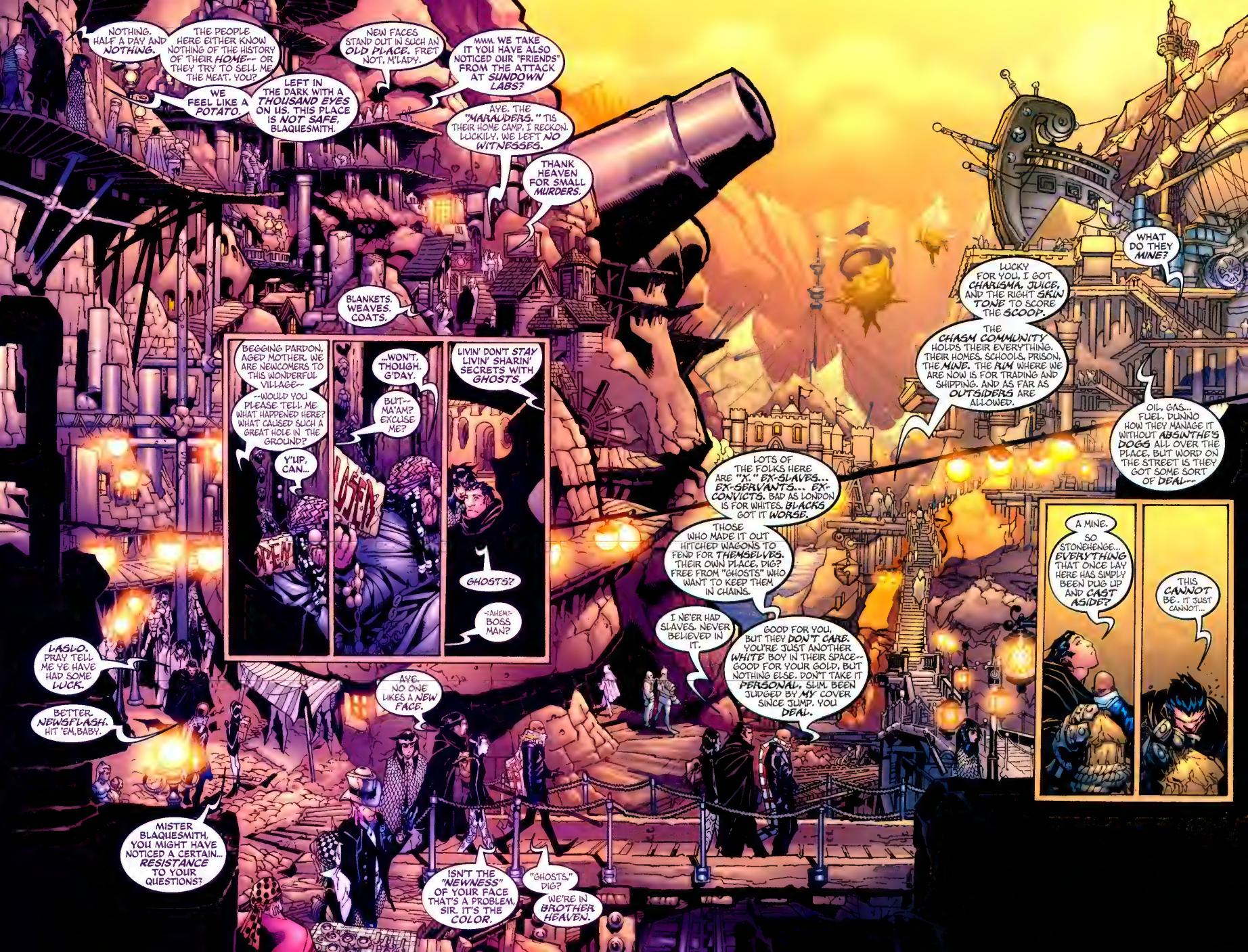
BATTY AS A FRUITCAKE, 'ER HIGHNESS IS, I'LL SAY THAT F'R 'ER.
VICTORIA?
...
WE WERE SORT OF RAPPING HERE. MAYBE YOU NOTICED. SECRET WEAPON. HONOR AN' THE BATTLE AN' ALL THAT HYPE.
YE'VE NAE SAID BOO SINCE WE LEFT THE LABS. ARE YE--
SECRETS. WE CONTEMPLATE... SECRETS.
YOU SPEAK OF "HONOR" THIS... "QUEST..." SECRETS TEAR ASUNDER THOSE TIES THAT BIND.
'TIS BEEN OUR EXPERIENCE, THAT BEFORE A JOURNEY...
...'TIS BEST TO CALL ALL SECRETS OUT INTO LIGHT.

THOSE... THOSE AREN'T HER HANDS. I MEAN, THEY ARE, BUT THE SURGERY REQUIRED--
STUDY HALL LATER, KID. LATER.
AYE. SECRETS. I UNDERSTAND.
CAN'T WATCH YOUR BACK AND YOUR FRONT AT ONCE. GO ON.
WE MAKE NOW AN OATH. SEALED IN BLOOD.
BIT SEVERE FR A DAY IN THE COUNTRY, WOT?
I GOT BUCKETS OF SECRETS, MUM. LEAST OF WHICH IS I DON'T LIKE ME 'AND SEVERED OFF--
NOTHING TO HIDE, NOTHING INSIDE... KEPT FROM THOSE WITH WHOM WE RIDE.
PLEDGE.
SKIRK
LIKE I SAID, TOOTS... I'M HIS. BUT I GOT YOUR BACK TOO.
WERE YOU AWARE THAT TETANUS AND OTHER BACTERIA BREED ON--
TINI.
OH, ALRIGHT.
AGGH!
GODS, ARE YE HALF STORK OR HALF BAY-KNEED NINNY, YE POOF?! TIS JUST A PRICK!
"WE CHANGED THE WORLD. I CHANGED THE--"
NO SECRETS.
NO SECRETS.

ONCE UPON A TIME, I HAD A LITTLE DOG. HER NAME WAS BRUNHILDA.
SHE WAS MISSING A LEG AND A THIRD AN EAR DUE TO MY BOYISH PENCHANT FOR EXPLORATORY SURGERY. BUT SHE LOVED ME WITH ALL HER DOGGY HEART.
EVEN WHEN I REPLACED HER REMAINING EXTREMITIES WITH TABLE LEGS AND RIVITED SHUT HER JAW WITH COPPER--
I SWEAR THAT ANIMAL LOVED ME. LOYAL TO THE VERY END. WHEN IT WAS HER TIME TO GO, I REPAID HER KINDNESS WITH A PAINLESS DEATH.
OF COURSE, I ATE HER EYES AFTERWARDS. SO WE COULD BE TOGETHER. I WAS FIVE.
I TELL YOU THIS TO ASSURE YOU I AM A MONARCH WHO APPRECIATES A CULTIVATED SENSE OF LOYALTY-- AND TO MAKE CERTAIN YOUR EARS STILL FUNCTION.
S'IL VOUS PLAIT... PAS...

PERPLEXED AM I, ladies! WHEN THE ONLY MAN IN LONDON TO MANIFEST EVEN A [illegible] OF HONOR IS FRENCH— WHAT IS THIS WORLD COMING TO?!
HELL IN A HEADBASKET, SIR.
AIIIEEE!
THIRTEEN HOURS OF FIDDLE-DIDDLING, AND NARY A TWITCH, A LOOSE LIP, NOR SHRIEKED CONFESSION TO BE HAD.
YOU HAD BETTER HURRY UP, LORD. HE WON'T LAST LONG.
IF ALL OF NAPOLEON'S MEN WERE THIS LOYAL, I MIGHT ALMOST HAVE TO CONSIDER HIM AN EIGHTH OF A THREAT.
V-VIVE LA FRANCE!
VIVE LA nada, CHUM. TALES FROM YOU, OR NO, YOUR BELOVED NAPOLEON WILL NOT LAST A FORTNIGHT.
I'LL FIND HIM, UNZIP HIS SPINE FROM HIS BACK, AND WEAR IT AS A HAT WHILE SINGING Frere Jacques.
INHUMAN MONSTER...
MISS HISS... IT'S SPEAKING OUT OF TURN AGAIN.
FRANCE WILL NEVER BOW TO YOUR--
HUSH.
AIIEEE!
CHOMP
THIS LITTLE PIGGIE WENT DOWN THE ESOPHAGUS--
MEWRRR!
SNOOKLES?


LADIES, WRAP ME UP SOME FRENCH ONION SOUP TO GO. I'M DONE HERE. BATCAT IS HOME.
YES YOU ARE, AREN'T YOU? AREN'T YOU MY LITTLE ABOMINATION?
PRRRRR
DID BATCATTY FLY HOME TO TELL BIG DADDY THAT FAUST HAS FOUND HIS MISSING BLAQUESMITH? I THINK YOU DID --
BUT IF SO, WHY HASN'T FAUST CALLED ME HIMSELF FOR KUDOS AND MILK TREATS? HMMMM?
WHISPER TO ME, LITTLEST SPY... WHISPER SWEETLY...
SNKT
LORD, WE ARE CLOSE NOW. THE WIND CARRIES HIS SCENT. A DAY, OR TWO AT THE MOST--
OKAY, SKIP THE SUNSHINE, CAT. GIVE ME THE WORDS HE DOESN'T KNOW YOU CAUGHT.
HE TRUSTS ME.
VICTORIA?
HE'LL LEAD ME TO ABE'S PRECIOUS ENGINE, AND WHEN HE DOES, I'LL DRAG THEM BOTH TO LONDON--
AND WITH THEM, I WILL WIN MY FREEDOM.
YOU CRAFTY LITTLE WHORE... DO TELL...


NOTHING. HALF A DAY AND NOTHING.
THE PEOPLE HERE EITHER KNOW NOTHING OF THE HISTORY OF THEIR HOME-- OR THEY TRY TO SELL ME THE MEAT. YOU?
WE FEEL LIKE A POTATO.
LEFT IN THE DARK WITH A THOUSAND EYES ON US. THIS PLACE IS NOT SAFE. BLAQUESMITH.
NEW FACES STAND OUT IN SUCH AN OLD PLACE. FRET NOT, M'LADY.
MMM. WE TAKE IT YOU HAVE ALSO NOTICED OUR "FRIENDS" FROM THE ATTACK AT SUNDOWN LABS?
AYE. THE "MARAUDERS." 'TIS THEIR HOME CAMP, I RECKON. LUCKILY, WE LEFT NO WITNESSES.
THANK HEAVEN FOR SMALL MURDERS.
BLANKETS. WEAVES. COATS.
BEGGING PARDON, AGED MOTHER. WE ARE NEWCOMERS TO THIS WONDERFUL VILLAGE--
--WOULD YOU PLEASE TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED HERE? WHAT CAUSED SUCH A GREAT HOLE IN THE GROUND?
Y'UP, CAN...
...WON'T, THOUGH. G'DAY.
BUT-- MA'AM? EXCUSE ME?
LISTEN
LIVIN' DON'T STAY LIVIN' SHARIN' SECRETS WITH GHOSTS.
GHOSTS?
-:AHEM:- BOSS MAN?
LASLO. PRAY TELL ME YE HAVE HAD SOME LUCK.
BETTER. NEWSFLASH. HIT 'EM, BABY.
MISTER BLAQUESMITH, YOU MIGHT HAVE NOTICED A CERTAIN... RESISTANCE TO YOUR QUESTIONS?
AYE. NO ONE LIKES A NEW FACE.
ISN'T THE "NEWNESS" OF YOUR FACE THAT'S A PROBLEM, SIR. IT'S THE COLOR.
"GHOSTS." DIG? WE'RE IN BROTHER HEAVEN.
I NE'ER HAD SLAVES. NEVER BELIEVED IN IT.
GOOD FOR YOU, BUT THEY DON'T CARE. YOU'RE JUST ANOTHER WHITE BOY IN THEIR SPACE-- GOOD FOR YOUR GOLD, BUT NOTHING ELSE. DON'T TAKE IT PERSONAL, SLIM. BEEN JUDGED BY MY COVER SINCE JUMP. YOU DEAL.
THOSE WHO MADE IT OUT HITCHED WAGONS TO FEND FOR THEMSELVES. THEIR OWN PLACE, DIG? FREE FROM "GHOSTS" WHO WANT TO KEEP THEM IN CHAINS.
LOTS OF THE FOLKS HERE ARE "X." EX-SLAVES... EX-SERVANTS... EX-CONVICTS. BAD AS LONDON IS FOR WHITES, BLACKS GOT IT WORSE.
THE CHASM COMMUNITY HOLDS THEIR EVERYTHING. THEIR HOMES, SCHOOLS, PRISON, THE MINE. THE RUM WHERE WE ARE NOW IS FOR TRADING AND SHIPPING. AND AS FAR AS OUTSIDERS ARE ALLOWED.
LUCKY FOR YOU, I GOT CHARISMA, JUICE, AND THE RIGHT SKIN TONE TO SCORE THE SCOOP.
WHAT DO THEY MINE?
OIL. GAS... FUEL. DUNNO HOW THEY MANAGE IT WITHOUT ABSINTHE'S DOGS ALL OVER THE PLACE. BUT WORD ON THE STREET IS THEY GOT SOME SORT OF DEAL--
A MINE. SO STONEHENGE... EVERYTHING THAT ONCE LAY HERE HAS SIMPLY BEEN DUG UP AND CAST ASIDE?
THIS CANNOT BE. IT JUST CANNOT...

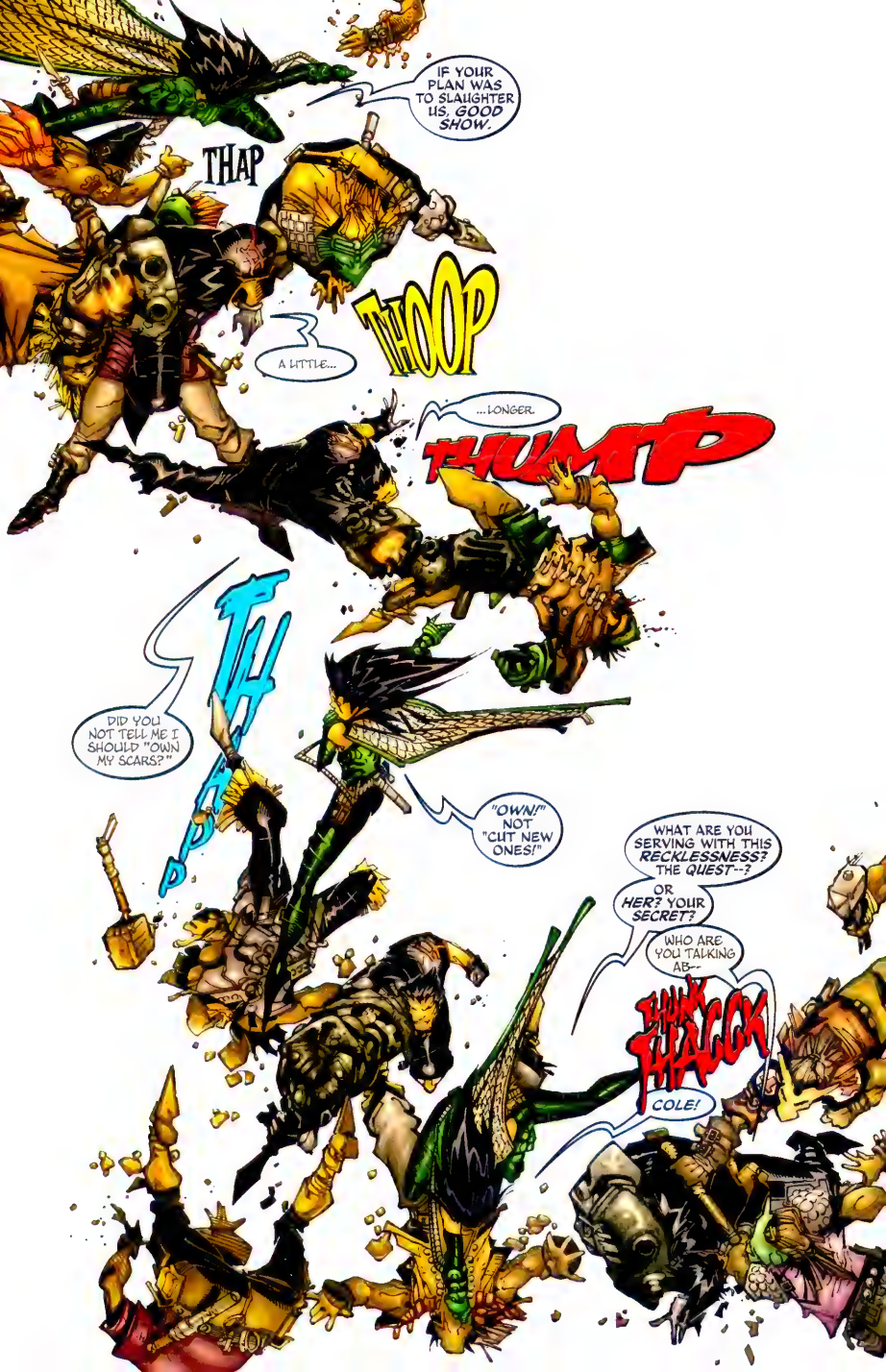
HOLD ON, DADDY-O. WE'RE NOT OUT OF IT YET. NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW EXACTLY HOW THE CHASM WAS DUG. DIG--?
BUT THEY ALL AGREE ON WHO DID IT.
THIS IS WHERE IT GETS HAIRY...
TAKING BETS ON WHETHER THOSE BLIGHTERS EVER COME BACK! ONE OF 'EM COULDN'T FIND HIS ASS FROM HIS ELBOW!
AND THE RHYMING? WHAT WAS THAT--?
YOU THERE! GUARDSMEN!
THE MARAUDERS. FANTABULOUS... FULL OF SPARKLES, THIS ONE.
NOT GOOD, MISS. NOT GOOD.
BLAQUESMITH-- WHAT HAS RATTLED LOOSE IN YOUR SKULL?!
I WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOUR LEADER-- SIR MAMBUTU...
...PLEASE.
OH, REALLY, NOW? WELL, LET ME HOP RIGHT TO THE GATE AND CALL HIM FROM HIS BATH!
WHO MIGHT I SAY IS CALLING? YOU'RE A MIGHT TALL TO BE THE PRINCE OF WALES-- MUST BE YOU'RE THE KING OF SPAIN--?
PLEASE, SIR. TAKE PITY ON A TRAVELER. IT IS SIMPLY AN AUDIENCE I SEEK--
HAVE AN "AUDIENCE" WITH YOURSELF, GHOST. THE X DOESN'T DEAL WITH THE PALE.
WE BELIEVE THIS COURSE OF ACTION TO BE ESPECIALLY UNWISE, COLE--
WE ARE CLOSE, VICTORIA. TOO CLOSE--
--I WILL NOT BE KEPT FROM HER ANY LONGER BY RACISTS OR ROUGH-NECKS!
"HER?"
ONE MORE THING, GOOD SIR...
I KILLED FIVE OF YOUR FELLOWS TWO DAYS BACK IN THE HOUSE OF SUNDOWN.
I WOULD SEE YOUR "MAMBUTU" NOW, OR SHALL I MAKE IT AN EVEN DOZEN?

TAK TAK.
TEK TAK TAK.
CAN'T SAY ENOUGH HOW THIS PAINS ME, GIRL. TWENTY YEARS BACK I'D BE RIDING SHOTGUN ON THIS HEAD TRIP.
TAK TEK TAK
TEK TEK TAK
SWEET MAN. I THANK YE FOR BOTH THY KINDNESS AND CHIVALRY, BUT I MUST AWAY. ALONE.
ONE DAY SEPARATES US... BUT ONE DAY.
I KNOW, BUT I'VE ALREADY SENT ONE YOUNG KITTEN DOWN THESE DARK ROADS. NOT SO KEEN ON SENDING ANOTHER.

YOU REALLY THINK YOU'RE GONNA CATCH UP TO COLE AND THOSE OTHER CATS ALONE? IF YOU GIVE ME A DAY, MAYBE--
YOU HAVE OUTFITTED ME WITH THIS WONDROUS STEEL HORSE AND TAUGHT ME TO RIDE IT. YOU HAVE BEEN AN ANGEL, MISTER SUNDOWN... BUT I CANNOT TARRY ANY LONGER.
IT FEELS AS IF I'VE WAITED FOR A HUNDRED YEARS TO SEE THAT MAN.
AS TO DARK ROADS, I FEAR NOT. I HAVE TREAD UPON WORSE...
"...FAR WORSE."
A CANCER RANKLES IN THE BREAST OF THE LONE WANDERER. UNWELCOME COMPANION.
I HAVE MADE A MISTAKE.

BLINDED BY THE DRAGON'S FIRE, I FEAR I HAVE LOST MY WAY...
...I FEAR.
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE THE TWO SERPENTS, DOUBT AND FEAR, NIPPED AT MY MIND?
THACK
LIGHTNING DOUBTS NOT WHICH TREE TO STRIKE.
THE ARTIST'S CHISEL DOUBTS NOT THE BEAUTY WITHIN THE STONE, YET--
TAKE THEM DOWN! FOR THE X!
AHHHHHH
A CAPITAL STRATAGEM, THIS!
IS THIS THE OUTCOME YOU INTENDED--
--BLAQUESMITH?
--SHE HAS STOLEN MY EYES, MY...
FAUST, PLEASE...
...NOT YET.

NOT YET...
NOT YET WHAT, WOMAN?!?
...WE WOULD INTRODUCE THIS ROGUE TO LONDON FINERY.
THWUMP
MORE COMING, COLE!
NO. THE LONE WANDERER LIES BEYOND HUMAN DOUBT.
HE NEEDS NO CRUTCH ON THIS PATH.
DICE HAVE BEEN CAST, AND HOWEVER THIS GAME IS PLAYED--
--WITH LEGS OF OAK AND BACK OF STONE, I WILL SEE MY MASTER SATISFIED. AFTER ALL...
THERE IS STILL ANOTHER PIECE STAGED IN THE PLAY.
CAN WE OFFICIALLY CALL THIS A BAD IDEA NOW?
OR DID YOU WANT TO WAIT UNTIL YOU WERE KILLED?
WE DO NOT DIE TODAY, BOY!
JUST A LITTLE LONGER...
CRIMINY! WHAT'S HE THINKING, HE'S GOING TO KICK THE ENGINE OUT OF THEM?
BLOKE'S GOT NO SENSE OF DIPLOMACY LIKE US--


IF YOUR PLAN WAS TO SLAUGHTER US, GOOD SHOW.
THAP
A LITTLE...
THOOP
...LONGER.
THUMP
DID YOU NOT TELL ME I SHOULD "OWN MY SCARS?"
"OWN!" NOT "CUT NEW ONES!"
WHAT ARE YOU SERVING WITH THIS RECKLESSNESS? THE QUEST--?
OR HER? YOUR SECRET?
WHO ARE YOU TALKING AB--
THWK
THACK
COLE!

BACK TO THE GRAVE, GHOST!
THACK THUNK
KRTCH
TRAITOR WHELP!
THACK THUNK
THACK
COME ON.
BMPHF
THACK THUNK THUNK
THACK
COME ON.
THWUMP
YE WOULDN'T SLAG A MIDGET WE GOGGLES, WOULD YE, LUV?
KRUNCH
COME O--
ENOUGH!!!
WHO DARES BRING THE CLOSED FIST OF THE WHITE MAN TO MY HOME?!

THE WHITE STING OF ANGER AND OPPRESSION IS FORBIDDEN IN THE HOUSE OF MAMBUTU X!
BROTHER X, THESE DOGS SAY THEY KILLED OUR BROTHERS/ THEY ATTACKED US WITHOUT QUARTER--
GRAVE ACCUSATIONS, BROTHER.. IF SUCH BE TRUE, THEN THE GHOSTS WILL LEARN THE LAW OF CHASM--
--AND THEY WILL SWEAT OFF THEIR PENANCE... IN THE HOLE.
THE HOLE.
YOU GOT INSIDE, YOU TWISTED BASTARD.. BUT HAS YOUR BRILLIANCE FIGURED A WAY OUT?
part one
chris bachalo joe kelly
creators
richard friend
inks
james rochelle
colors
comicraft's rich 'n' saida
letters
john layman
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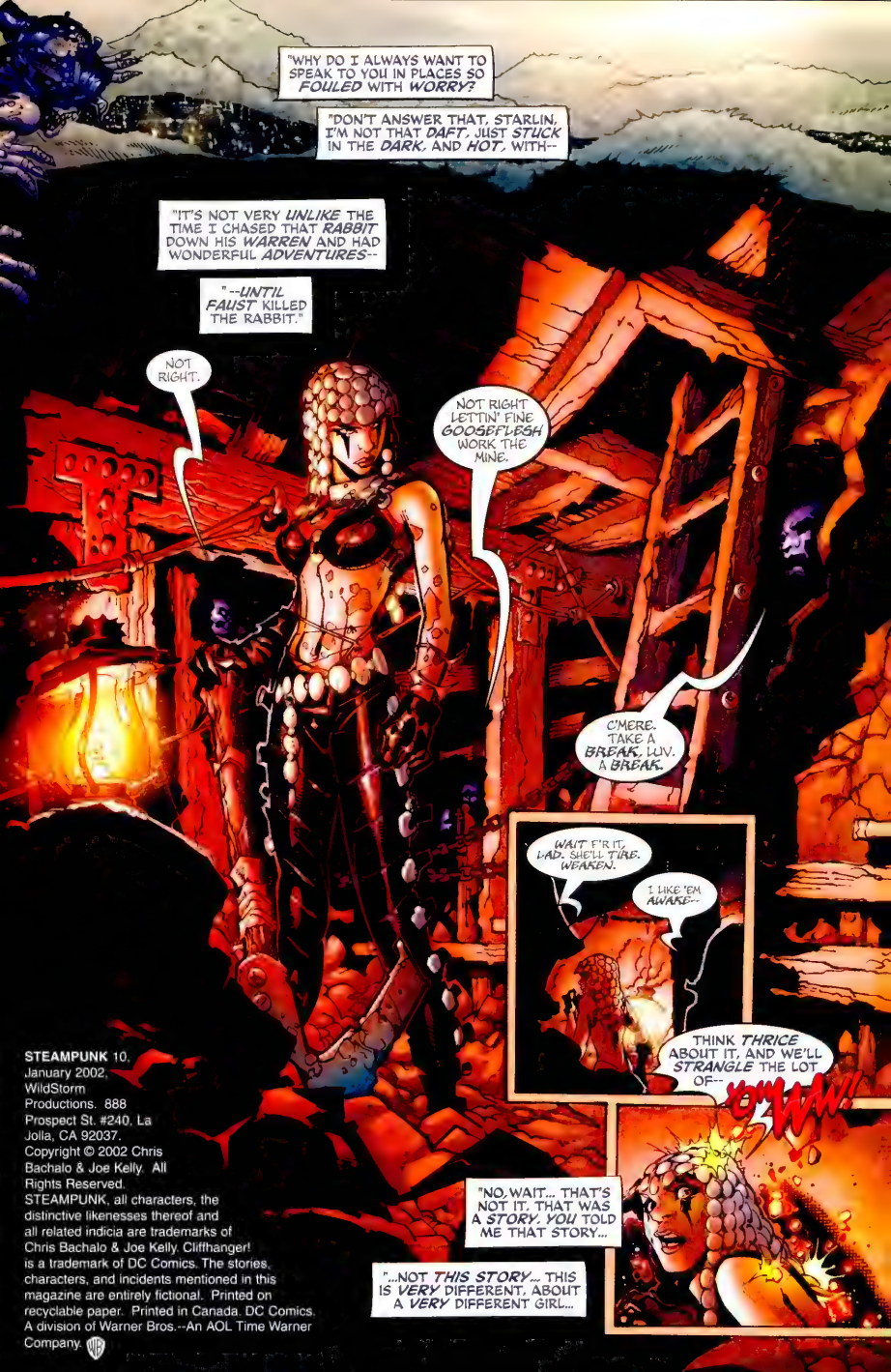
"WHY DO I ALWAYS WANT TO SPEAK TO YOU IN PLACES SO FOULED WITH WORRY?
"DON'T ANSWER THAT, STARLIN. I'M NOT THAT DAFT. JUST STUCK IN THE DARK. AND HOT. WITH--
"IT'S NOT VERY UNLIKE THE TIME I CHASED THAT RABBIT DOWN HIS WARREN AND HAD WONDERFUL ADVENTURES--
"--UNTIL FAUST KILLED THE RABBIT."
NOT RIGHT.
NOT RIGHT LETTIN' FINE GOOSEFLESH WORK THE MINE.
C'MERE. TAKE A BREAK, LUV. A BREAK.
WAIT F'R IT, LAD. SHE'LL TIRE. WEAKEN.
I LIKE 'EM AWAKE--
THINK THRICE ABOUT IT, AND WE'LL STRANGLE THE LOT OF--
OMWW!
"NO. WAIT... THAT'S NOT IT. THAT WAS A STORY. YOU TOLD ME THAT STORY...
"...NOT THIS STORY... THIS IS VERY DIFFERENT. ABOUT A VERY DIFFERENT GIRL...

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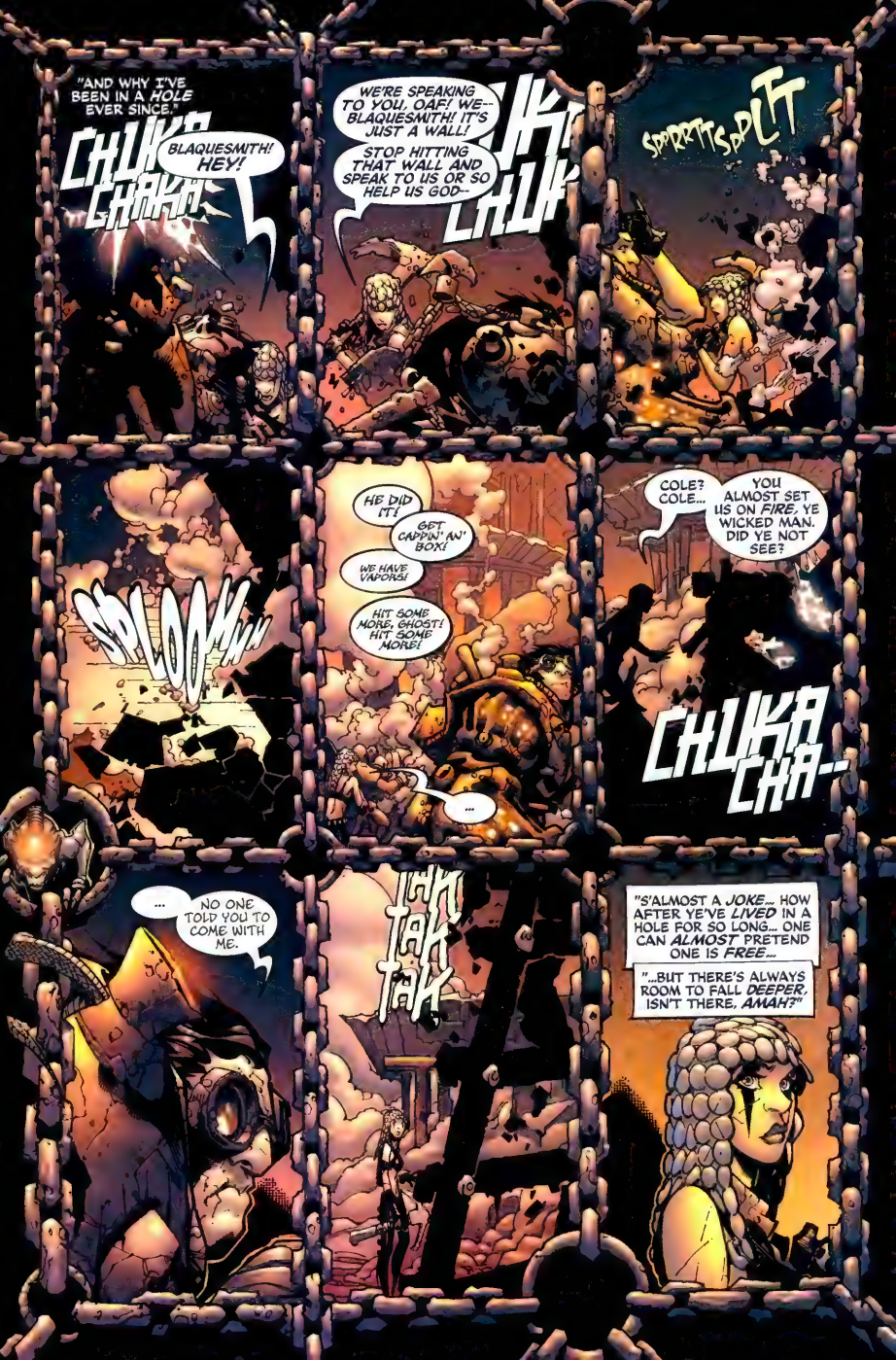
"...AND A VERY DIFFERENT BOY.
CHAKA CHUKA CHAKA CHUKA
CHAKA CHUKA CHUKA CHAKA
"BUT THERE'S STILL A HOLE. AND AN ADVENTURE...
"...AND FAUST."
WATCH IT, YOU DULLARD! YOU NEARLY SINGED US TO BACON!
"YOU WEREN'T EVER AFRAID OF FAUST, WERE YOU? YOU WEREN'T AFRAID OF ANYTHING.
"AND THAT'S WHY YOU'RE DEAD...


"AND WHY I'VE BEEN IN A HOLE EVER SINCE."
CHUKA CHAKA!
BLAQUESMITH! HEY!
WE'RE SPEAKING TO YOU, OAF! WE-- BLAQUESMITH! IT'S JUST A WALL!
STOP HITTING THAT WALL AND SPEAK TO US OR SO HELP US GOD--
CHUK
SPPRRTTSPPLTT
SPLOOMMM
HE DID IT!
GET CAPPIN' AN' BOX!
WE HAVE VAPORS!
HIT SOME MORE, GHOST! HIT SOME MORE!
...
COLE? COLE...
YOU ALMOST SET US ON FIRE, YE WICKED MAN. DID YE NOT SEE?
CHUKA CHA--
...
NO ONE TOLD YOU TO COME WITH ME.
TAK TAK TAK
"S'ALMOST A JOKE... HOW AFTER YE'VE LIVED IN A HOLE FOR SO LONG... ONE CAN ALMOST PRETEND ONE IS FREE...
"...BUT THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM TO FALL DEEPER, ISN'T THERE, AMAH?"

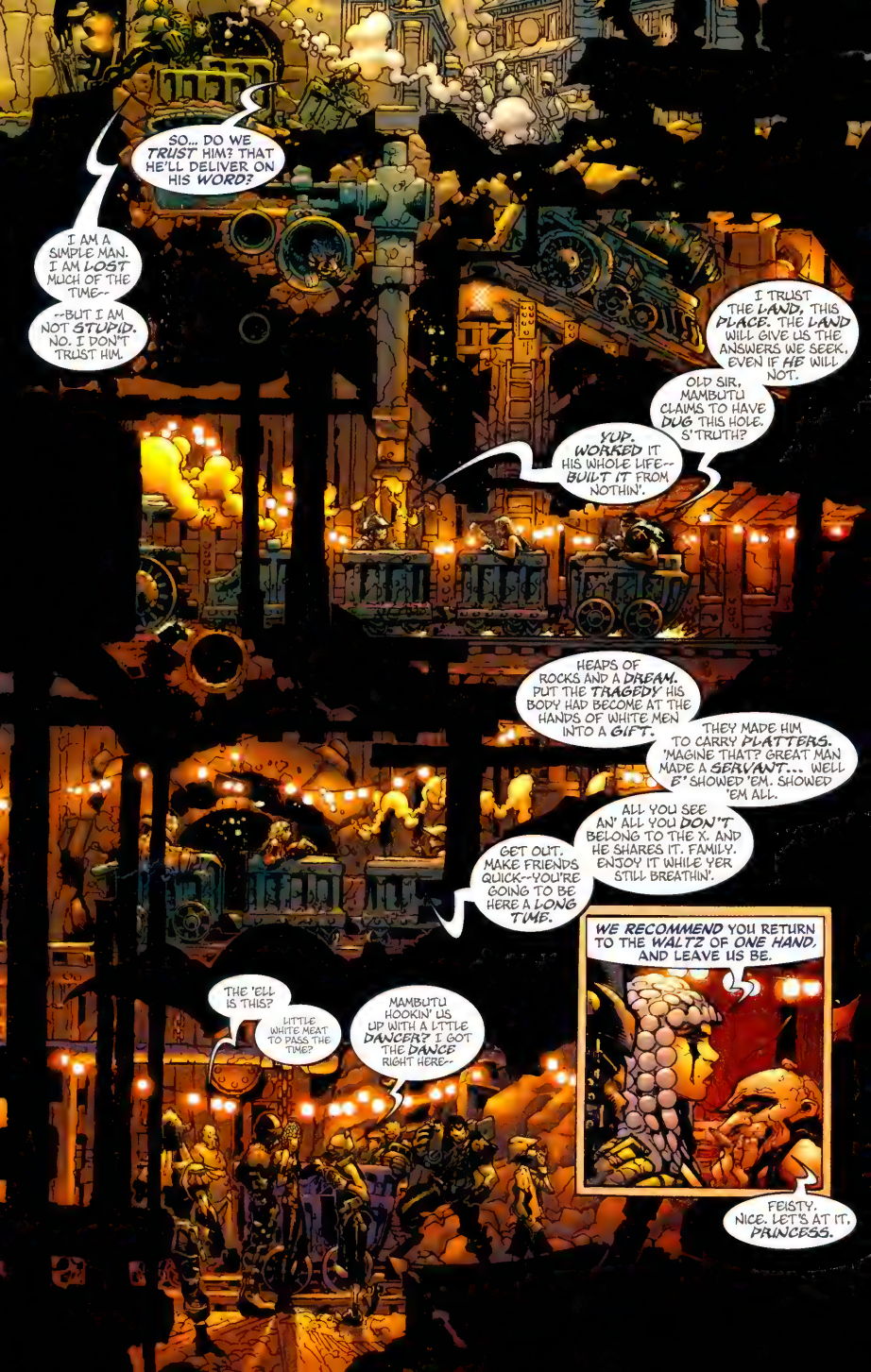
I DO NOT LIKE WHITE PEOPLE...
...I LOVE THEM.
THE GHOSTS HAVE TAUGHT ME EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MAKING THE CHASM COMMUNITY A PERFECT PLACE-- A HOME--
--BY SHOWING ME EXACTLY WHAT NOT TO DO.
I DO NOT STEAL. I DO NOT RAPE. I DO NOT RELY ON OTHERS TO DO MY WORK. I DO NOT SPREAD NOR MALINGER. I BUILD WITH FOCUS, I RULE WITH PASSION--
--AND I KEEP MY BORDERS CLOSED TO THOSE WHO WOULD SPOIL ALL I'VE BUILT.
KNOWLEDGE IS POWER. SECRETS ARE LIFE.
WHY WOULD I SHARE EITHER WITH THE SNAKES WHO COME TO PISS IN MY EDEN?

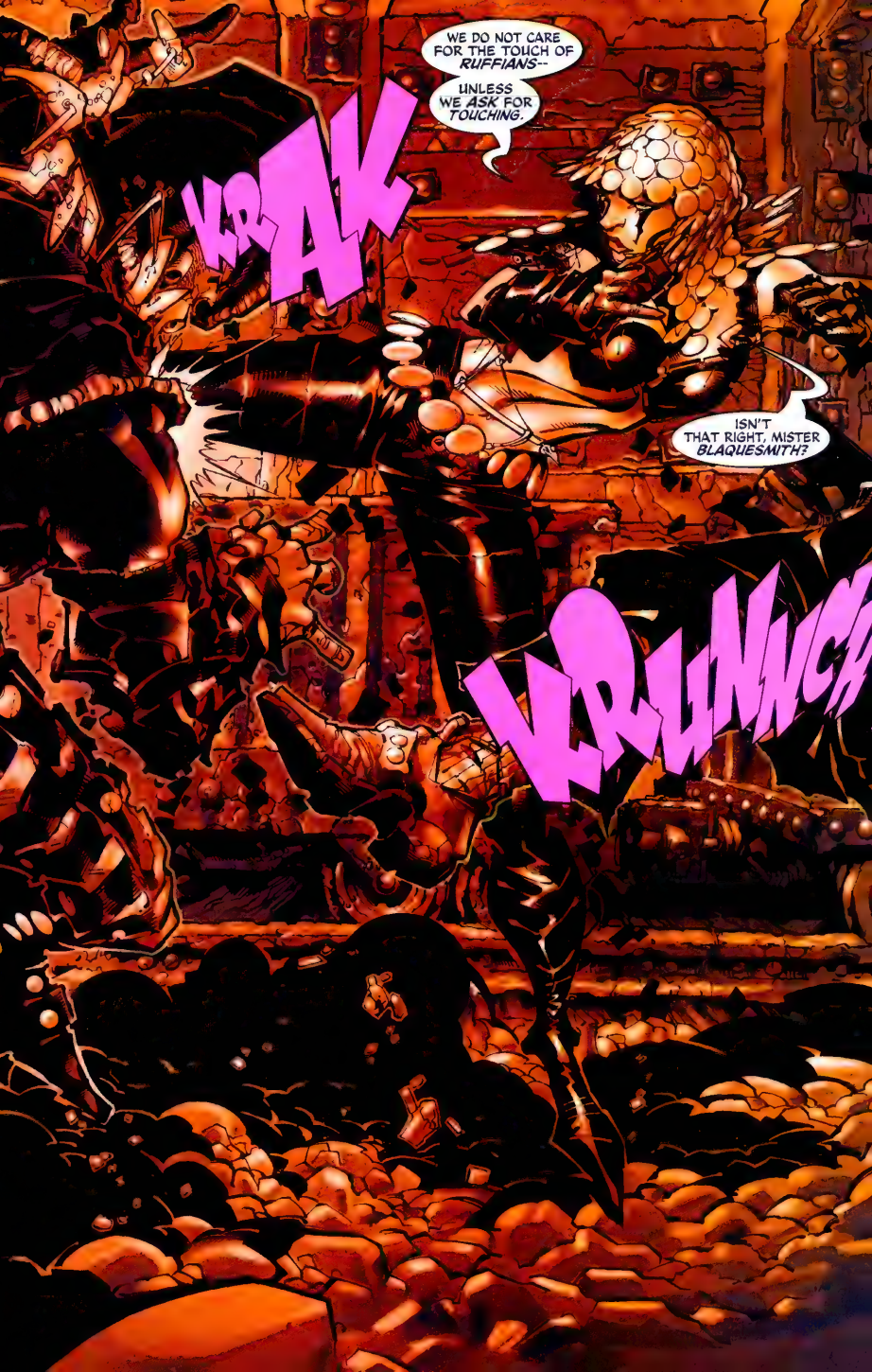
WE ARE NOT "SNAKES--"
YET YOU SHED SKIN AND SIN ALL OVER MY PEOPLE. THE X.
EH, SPEAKIN' OF, Y'R X-NEGS. I LOST A VERY VALUABLE SHOVEL IN THE FRACAS--
YOU'RE A DIFFICULT MAN TO FIND--
I'M A DIFFICULT MAN. PERIOD.
HRRN.
I NEED TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO STONEHENGE. YOU WILL GIVE ME THE ANSWERS I SEEK-- OR I WILL TAKE THEM.
HAA HAA HAA HAA HAA HAA
FUNNY, FUNNY GHOST. I SEE WHY YOU LIKE HIM, YOUNG SOLDIER.
I BUILT THE CHASM FROM STONE ONE. I KNOW EVERY-THING.
I'LL GET YE A NEW SHOVEL--JUS' STOW IT!
URK!
HE'S FUNNY? YOU'RE THE CAT BEEN SQUEEZING THE COUNTRY FOLKS FOR THEIR GREEN "PROTECTION" FROM A CAT YOU CAN'T BEAT.
KNOWLEDGE IS POWER, BUT POWER IS POWER TOO, YOUNG PANTHER. THE MINE BREATHES LIFE INTO LONDON--
ABSINTHE LEAVES THE X ALONE. WE HAVE A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIP. LIKE THIS WE ARE.
ONLY WHITE PERSON I CAN TOLERATE.

?!
PTOOEY
THERE IS NO FREEDOM SO LONG AS ABSINTHE LIVES.
YOU ARE A FOOL IF YOU BELIEVE OTHERWISE.
CRACK
SORRY, BIGGUN. I DON'T HIT LADIES, EVEN SKINNY, LOUD-MOUTHED ONES.
LET'S GET TO IT, THEN. RETRIBUTION. YOU COST ME MEN, FACE, TIME. THE CHASM DOESN'T WANT BLOOD FOR IT.
IT WANTS PAYBACK.
HOW HARD DOES THAT ARM WORK, BOY?
ANSWER THE QUESTION... TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED TO THIS PLACE, AND TELL ME WHERE MY... PROPERTY LIES--
--IT WILL DIG THROUGH THE EARTH FOR YOU.
SO WILL WE.
NO. THIS IS NOT--
DEAL.
HEH. GHOSTS...
I'VE SEEN MEN KILL THEIR OWN CHILDREN FOR MONEY. I SEEN THEM KILL BABIES FOR FREEDOM. I UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS...
...BUT FOR THE ANSWER TO A RIDDLE? CRAZY.

TRY TO KILL ME, WILL YOU?
HE'LL SEE... HE'LL SEE WHAT'S WHAT WHEN YOU VEX THE X-- MOVE, GHOST!
OH--
THE GOOD PEOPLE HERE JUST GET FRIENDLIER BY THE MOMENT...
...WILL YOU BE CLOSING YOUR DOOR IN MY FACE AS WELL?
DON'T SPEAK T' GHOSTS. NO GOOD EVER CAME OF IT.
GOOD WOMAN, JUDGE ME NOT BY THE COLOR OF MY SKIN, BUT THE CONTENT OF MY HEART...
...OR, AT WORST, THE DEPTH OF MY PURSE.
...
HAVE YOU EVER LOVED, BLINDLY? PLEASE, YOU KNOW WHAT I SEEK.
DINNIT HEAR IT FROM ME, BUT THERE WAS A RUCKUS YESTERDAY.
BIG FELLA. STRONG. TRICK ARM. IF HE'S THE ONE YOU WANT, BETTER CLING TO YER MEMORIES, GAL--
--'E'S IN DA HOLE NOW.
GHOSTS DON'T COME OUT THE HOLE WHAT GO IN.
CLOSED
YOU'D BE SURPRISED.

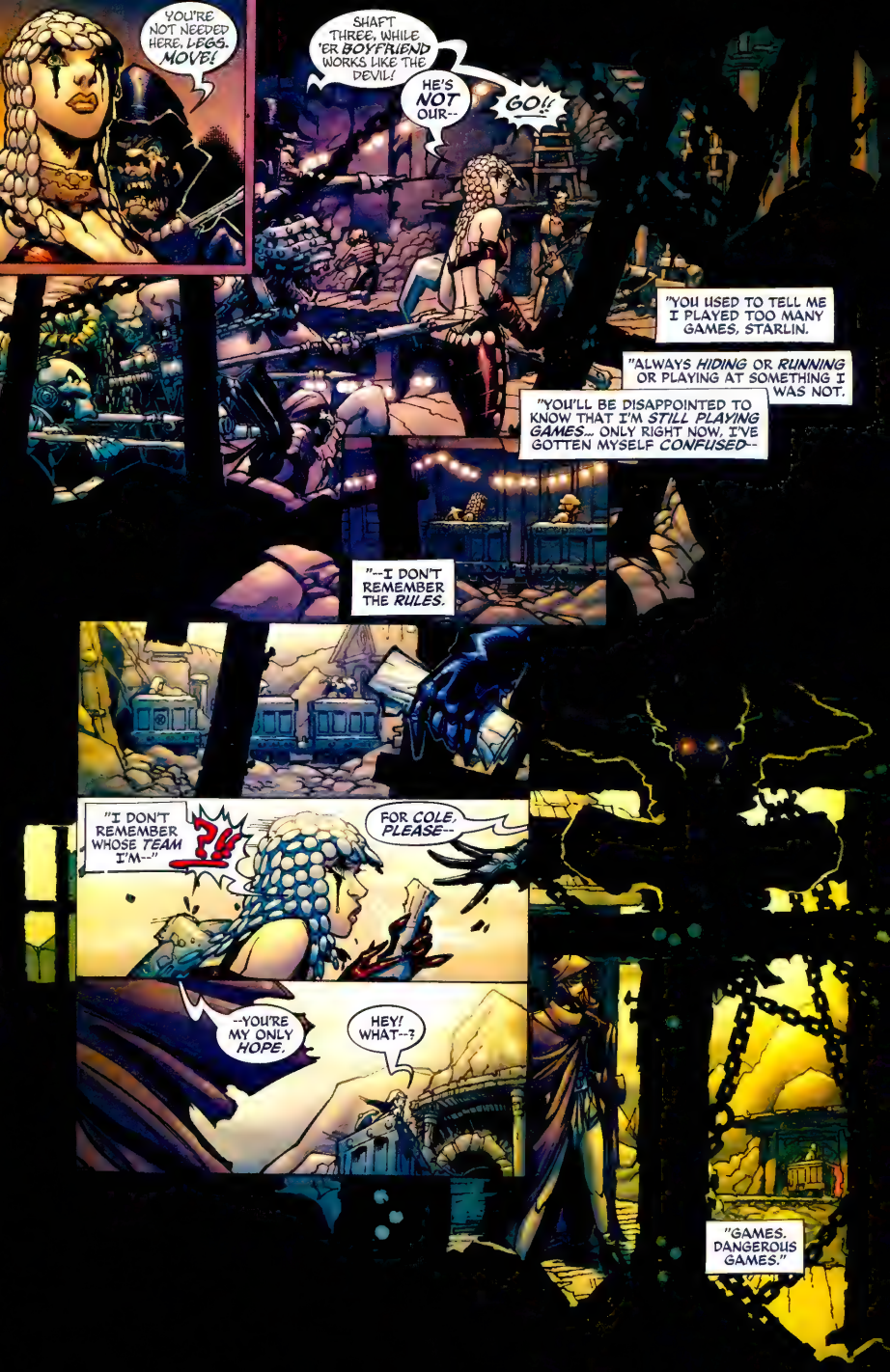
CLOSED
STONE COLUMNS, OLDER THAN AGE, ONCE STOOD WITH MAJESTY AND MYSTERY IN THIS PLACE--
--UNTIL THE TREACHERY OF HISTORY CREPT IN AND ATE THE EARTH BELOW.
LEAVING UNSURE GROUND IN ITS WAKE.
I FEEL THE TREMORS OF THOSE PROUD STONES FALLING. THEY ARE MY OWN LEGS, FALLING, TIPPING.
AS THE GROUND PULLS UP, CRESTED ON THE BACK OF MY ONCE-LITTLE DRAGON.
BURNS HER FIRE WITH SPITE FOR THIS OLD TEACHER? BURNS IT WITH TRUTH?
FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE I FIRST HELD HER, TREMBLING, I KNOW NOT WHICH WAY MY DRAGON WILL FLY, AND THE LONE WANDERER IS...
...LOST.
WHAT SPELL DOES "WOMAN" CAST THAT BAFFLES EVEN THE LIKES OF A MONSTER LIKE ME?
PRAY THAT THE ENCHANTMENT PASSES, WITH HASTE--
--AND MY LITTLE DRAGON RETURNS, ERE MY MASTER LEARNS HIS MONSTER TREMBLES ON UNSURE LEGS--
--ROCKED BY AN UNSTEADY HEART.

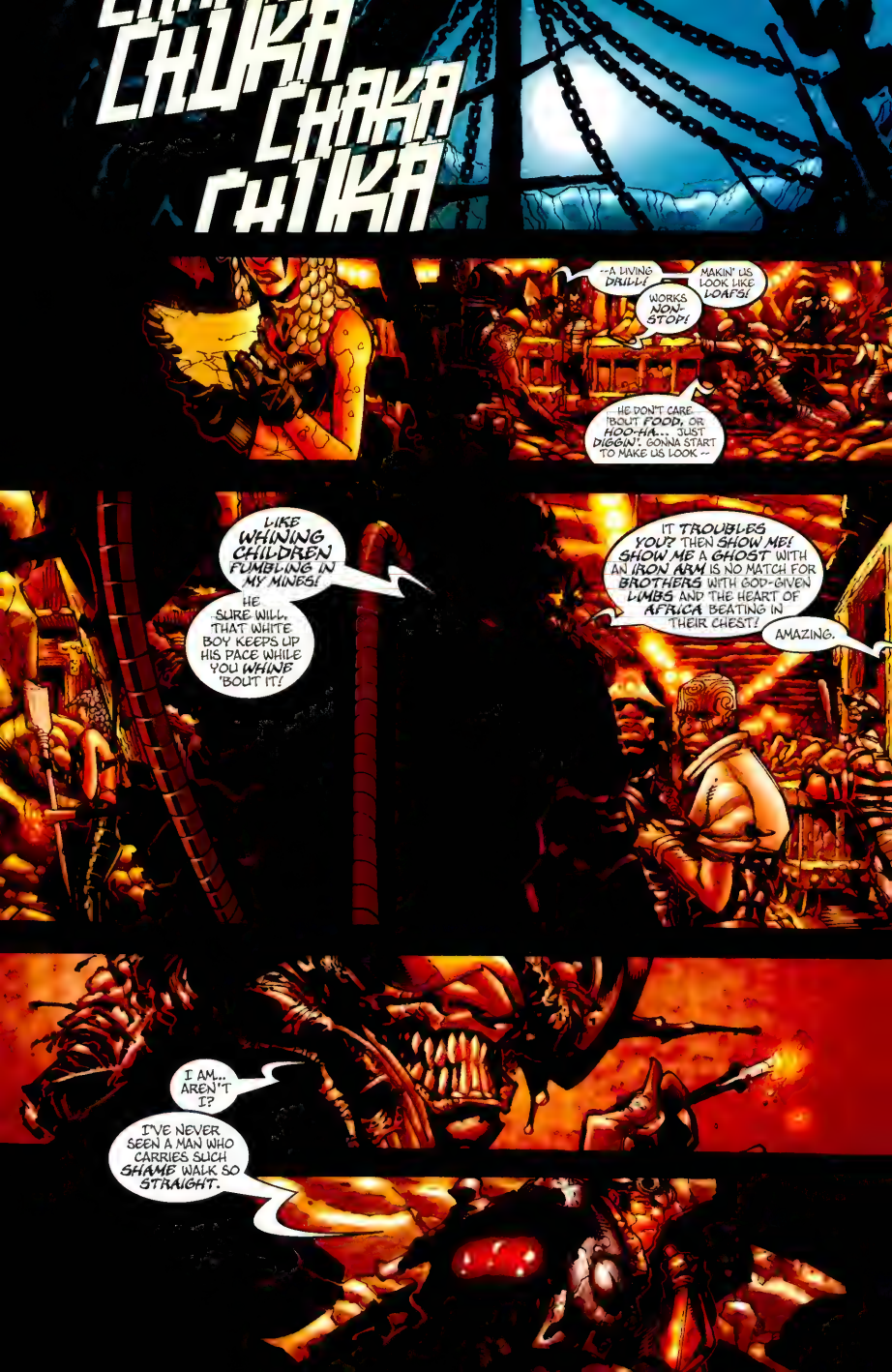

SO... DO WE TRUST HIM? THAT HE'LL DELIVER ON HIS WORD?
I AM A SIMPLE MAN. I AM LOST MUCH OF THE TIME--
--BUT I AM NOT STUPID. NO. I DON'T TRUST HIM.
I TRUST THE LAND, THIS PLACE. THE LAND WILL GIVE US THE ANSWERS WE SEEK, EVEN IF HE WILL NOT.
OLD SIR, MAMBUTU CLAIMS TO HAVE DUG THIS HOLE. S'TRUTH?
YUP. WORKED IT HIS WHOLE LIFE-- BUILT IT FROM NOTHIN'.
HEAPS OF ROCKS AND A DREAM. PUT THE TRAGEDY HIS BODY HAD BECOME AT THE HANDS OF WHITE MEN INTO A GIFT.
THEY MADE HIM TO CARRY PLATTERS. 'MAGINE THAT? GREAT MAN MADE A SERVANT... WELL E' SHOWED 'EM. SHOWED 'EM ALL.
ALL YOU SEE AN' ALL YOU DON'T BELONG TO THE X. AND HE SHARES IT. FAMILY. ENJOY IT WHILE YER STILL BREATHIN'.
GET OUT. MAKE FRIENDS QUICK--YOU'RE GOING TO BE HERE A LONG TIME.
WE RECOMMEND YOU RETURN TO THE WALTZ OF ONE HAND, AND LEAVE US BE.
FEISTY. NICE. LET'S AT IT, PRINCESS.
THE 'ELL IS THIS?
LITTLE WHITE MEAT TO PASS THE TIME?
MAMBUTU HOOKIN' US UP WITH A LITTLE DANCER? I GOT THE DANCE RIGHT HERE--


WE DO NOT CARE FOR THE TOUCH OF RUFFIANS--
UNLESS WE ASK FOR TOUCHING.
KRAK
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, MISTER BLAQUESMITH?
KRUNCH

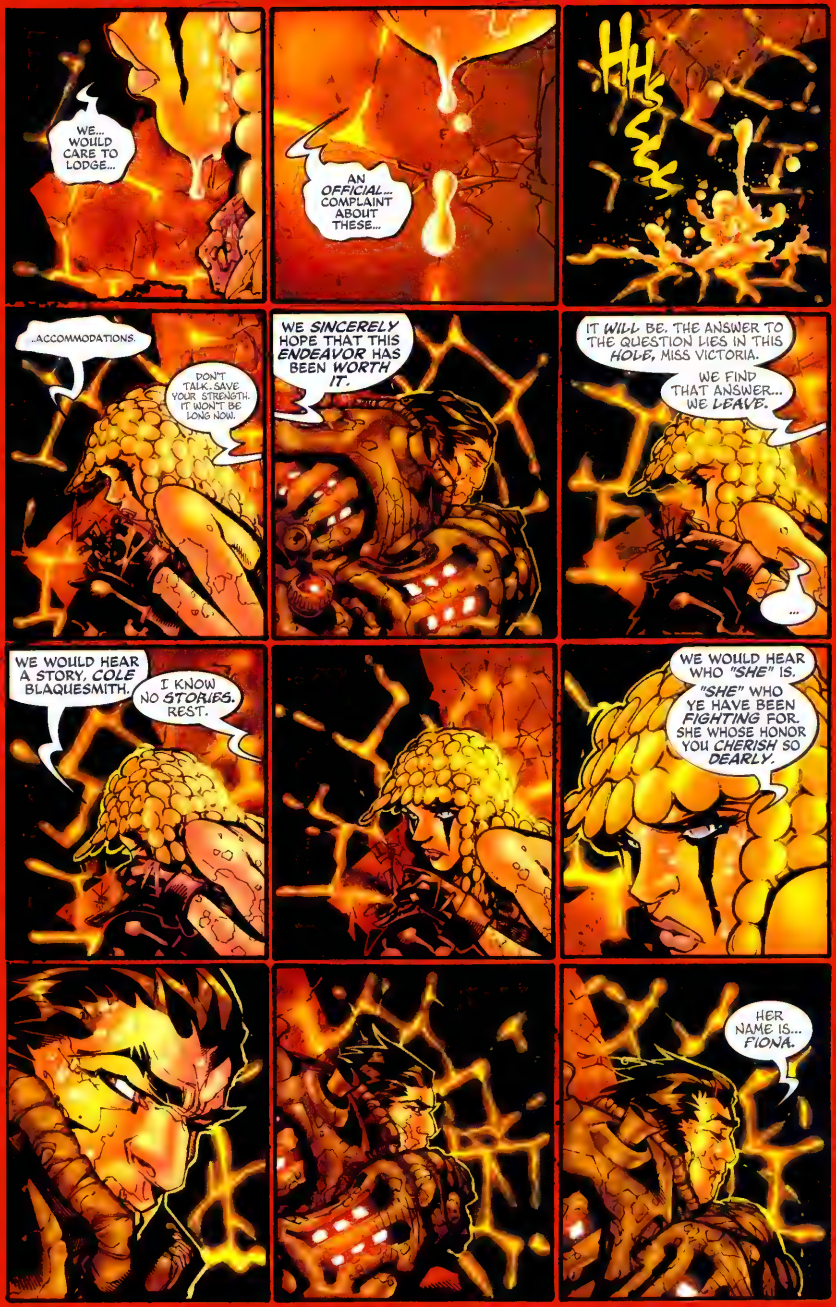
COLE?
SO MUCH FOR "PARTNERSHIP."
THIS IS WHAT HE WOULD HAVE ME MOVE?
SOLID GRANITE, MOSTLY. SOME FAULTS IF YE C'N SORT THEM OUT. THINKS THERE'S GAS IN THERE. FAT GAS.
SHOULD TAKE YOU 'BOUT A MONTH WITH YOUR HONEY AT YOUR SIDE. HERE'S A SPADE. YOU'LL NEED 'NOTHER EVERY FEW DAYS.
TAP TEK
I WILL NOT.
CREEEK
HSSHHH
TELL MAMBUTU IT WILL BE BROKEN BY WEEK'S END. HE HAS UNTIL THEN TO FULFILL HIS PROMISE.

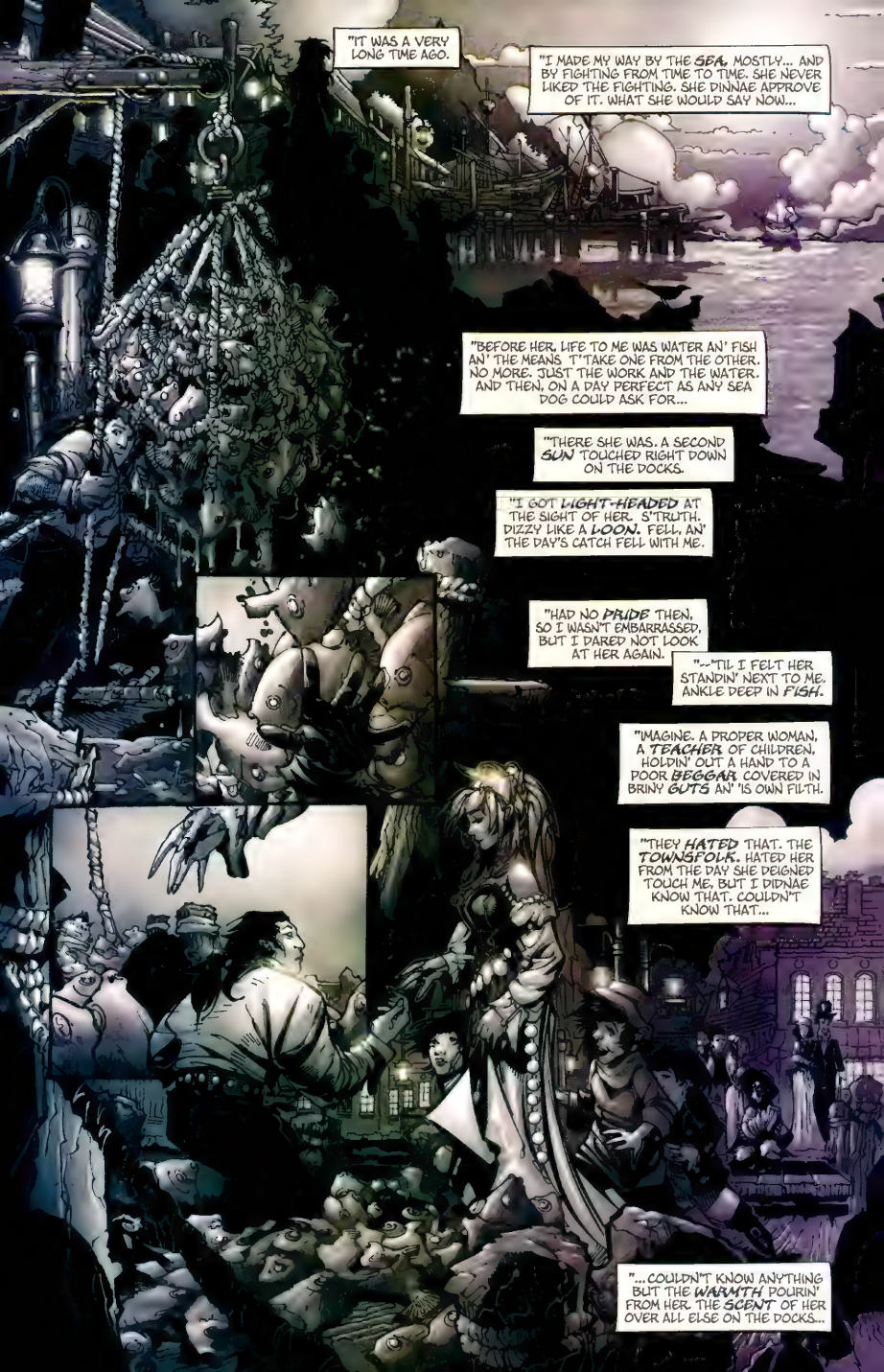
"THIS IS THE PART WHERE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO COMPLIMENT ME ON MY TASTE AND DECORATING SENSE.
"WHILE TRYING NOT TO DROOL, LITTLE BROTHER."
IT'S... IT'S NICE. WHERE ARE MY MATES?
WHY WORRY, LITTLE MAN? WHY WORRY?
YOU'VE BEEN SEPARATED, SO WE CAN TALK. BECAUSE I CAN SEE YOU'RE A FIGHTER WHO'S SPENT HIS LIFE ON THE RUN. BECAUSE YOU'RE SMART.
EVEN IF YOU DO DIG GOOSE-FLESH.
WITH ALL RESPECT, THAT'S HARDLY APPROPRIATE--
HOLD THAT TONGUE IN YOUR HEAD, GIRL! SHOW SOME RESPECT!
Hmmh!
YOU READ ME?!
I'M SORRY.
I'LL PLAY NICE...
EASY, YOUNG ONE. HERE WE HAVE NO NEED TO RAISE VOICES IN ANGER. WE MADE IT, KID. ENJOY IT.
THIS IS A PLACE WHERE MAGIC HAPPENS. YOU WANT TO BE A FAT CAT-- IT CAN HAPPEN. YOU WANT TO BE MY SHINING BLACK KNIGHT? IT CAN HAPPEN.
WHY DO I GET THE FEELING... LIKE I'VE COME HOME?


YOU'RE NOT NEEDED HERE, LEGS. MOVE!
SHAFT THREE, WHILE 'ER BOYFRIEND WORKS LIKE THE DEVIL!
HE'S NOT OUR--
GO!!
"YOU USED TO TELL ME I PLAYED TOO MANY GAMES, STARLIN.
"ALWAYS HIDING OR RUNNING OR PLAYING AT SOMETHING I WAS NOT.
"YOU'LL BE DISAPPOINTED TO KNOW THAT I'M STILL PLAYING GAMES... ONLY RIGHT NOW, I'VE GOTTEN MYSELF CONFUSED--
"--I DON'T REMEMBER THE RULES.
"I DON'T REMEMBER WHOSE TEAM I'M--"
?!
FOR COLE, PLEASE--
--YOU'RE MY ONLY HOPE.
HEY! WHAT--?
"GAMES. DANGEROUS GAMES."


CHUKA CHAKA CHUKA
--A LIVING DRILL!
MAKIN' US LOOK LIKE LOAFS!
WORKS NON-STOP!
HE DON'T CARE 'BOUT FOOD, OR HOO-HA... JUST DIGGIN'. GONNA START TO MAKE US LOOK --
LIKE WHINING CHILDREN FUMBLING IN MY MINES!
HE SURE WILL. THAT WHITE BOY KEEPS UP HIS PACE WHILE YOU WHINE 'BOUT IT!
IT TROUBLES YOU? THEN SHOW ME! SHOW ME A GHOST WITH AN IRON ARM IS NO MATCH FOR BROTHERS WITH GOD-GIVEN LIMBS AND THE HEART OF AFRICA BEATING IN THEIR CHEST!
AMAZING.
I AM... AREN'T I?
I'VE NEVER SEEN A MAN WHO CARRIES SUCH SHAME WALK SO STRAIGHT.

YOU MUST HAVE HAD YOUR SPINE REPLACED WITH A STEEL BAR.
THIS IS THE POSTURE OF PRIDE. FREEDOM FROM THE WORLD YOUR KIND SADDLED US WITH.
THERE IS NO ROOM FOR SHAME HERE.
IN MY LIFE, I WAS A FISHERMAN BEFORE...
...BEFORE ALL THIS. DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE BEST BAIT IS?
OTHER FISH.
WHEN ARE YE GOING TO NOTICE THE NET YOU CAUGHT THE "X" IN HAS TRAPPED YOU AS WELL?
HOW DARE YOU?!
WHAK
I AM A MAN OF HONOR! A FREE MAN! ALL HERE ARE FREE-- AND WE BOUGHT OUR FREEDOM THROUGH BLOOD!
THE PETTINESS AND EVIL OF LONDON AND THE REST DIES OUTSIDE MY GATES!
AND I SAY YOU ARE A SLAVE MASTER, MAMBUTU, WIELDING AN INVISIBLE WHIP.
WE'LL SEE WHO'S RIGHT... WHEN I "PAY MY DEBT," AND YOU OWE ME.
I SEE THAT WORKING THE HOLE HASN'T TAUGHT YOU ANYTHING YET, GHOST.
PUT HIM IN THE BLACK.


WE... WOULD CARE TO LODGE...
AN OFFICIAL... COMPLAINT ABOUT THESE...
HHSSS
...ACCOMMODATIONS.
DON'T TALK. SAVE YOUR STRENGTH. IT WON'T BE LONG NOW.
WE SINCERELY HOPE THAT THIS ENDEAVOR HAS BEEN WORTH IT.
IT WILL BE. THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION LIES IN THIS HOLE, MISS VICTORIA.
WE FIND THAT ANSWER... WE LEAVE.
...
WE WOULD HEAR A STORY, COLE BLAQUESMITH.
I KNOW NO STORIES. REST.
WE WOULD HEAR WHO "SHE" IS.
"SHE" WHO YE HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR. SHE WHOSE HONOR YOU CHERISH SO DEARLY.
HER NAME IS... FIONA.


"IT WAS A VERY LONG TIME AGO.
"I MADE MY WAY BY THE SEA, MOSTLY... AND BY FIGHTING FROM TIME TO TIME. SHE NEVER LIKED THE FIGHTING. SHE DINNAE APPROVE OF IT. WHAT SHE WOULD SAY NOW...
"BEFORE HER, LIFE TO ME WAS WATER AN' FISH AN' THE MEANS T'TAKE ONE FROM THE OTHER. NO MORE. JUST THE WORK AND THE WATER. AND THEN, ON A DAY PERFECT AS ANY SEA DOG COULD ASK FOR...
"THERE SHE WAS. A SECOND SUN TOUCHED RIGHT DOWN ON THE DOCKS.
"I GOT LIGHT-HEADED AT THE SIGHT OF HER. S'TRUTH. DIZZY LIKE A LOON. FELL, AN' THE DAY'S CATCH FELL WITH ME.
"HAD NO PRIDE THEN, SO I WASN'T EMBARRASSED, BUT I DARED NOT LOOK AT HER AGAIN.
"--'TIL I FELT HER STANDIN' NEXT TO ME. ANKLE DEEP IN FISH.
"IMAGINE. A PROPER WOMAN, A TEACHER OF CHILDREN, HOLDIN' OUT A HAND TO A POOR BEGGAR COVERED IN BRINY GUTS AN' 'IS OWN FILTH.
"THEY HATED THAT. THE TOWNSFOLK. HATED HER FROM THE DAY SHE DEIGNED TOUCH ME. BUT I DIDNAE KNOW THAT. COULDN'T KNOW THAT...
"... COULDN'T KNOW ANYTHING BUT THE WARMTH POURIN' FROM HER. THE SCENT OF HER OVER ALL ELSE ON THE DOCKS...

...I TOOK HER HAND,
MY HEART NE'ER LEAPT SO FAR ALL AT ONCE, AND I HAVE NE'ER TOUCHED ANOTHER THING AS SOFT IN MY LIFE.
THAT WAS MAGIC.
...
YOU ALRIGHT, MISS?
AYE, WE'RE FINE, FOOL. YET ANOTHER FOUL EXCRETION OF SWEAT IN OUR EYE...
...NOTHING BUT SWEAT.
HAVE YE EVER...
...HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LOVE LIKE THAT AGAIN..? IF EVEN JUST A TOUCH?

KLANG
...
MISS VICKY... WHY DID YE INSIST UPON COMING DOWN HERE WITH ME?
THAT'S THE DAY! THEN BACK TO WORK!
THOMP

IT SUITS YOU, YOUNG LION. TO PERFECTION.
NICE, ISN'T IT? THE LIFE UP HERE?
YER... WINE, SIR? AFORE OR AFTER--
AFTER. MAMBUTU IS HERE.
'COURSE, GUV.
THEY HATE YOU NOW. YOU KNOW THAT? QUESTION IS, DO YOU CARE?
NO. THE QUESTION IS... WHEN ARE WE GONNA STOP FLIRTING, AND WHEN'RE YOU GONNA ASK ME TO DANCE, YO?
LET'S WALK AND TALK, LITTLE MAN. LEAVE THE HELP BEHIND.
WORD, DADDY-O.
"WORD, DADDY-O"... 'ERE'S A WORD FOR YE, YE TWIT--
LIAR!
TO YER HEALTH, TRAITOR. 'OW COME YOU AIN'T IN AN UPROAR, SUNDOWN? E'S MANHANDLING YE WORST OF ALL!
YES, WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY...
METHOD ACTORS CAN BE DIFFICULT TO WORK WITH-- BUT WE GET THE JOB DONE.
I JUST HOPE LASLO REMEMBERS HE'S PLAYING THE ROLE. COME ON... LET'S SNOOP.

A WEEK... G'ADS, MAN. YOU AIN'T HUMAN--
NAH... HE'S BETTER. S'TRUTH.
A WEEK. UNBELIEVABLE. OUTSTANDING--
AND I WAS RIGHT ABOUT THE VAPOR. HAD ANOTHER ARM I'D PAT MYSELF ON THE BACK.
YOU DID IT. YE RIGHT BASTARD.
AYE... WE DID IT, MISS.
'COURSE... THIS ONLY TRULY COVERS PART OF YOUR DEBT. A MONTH OF WORK IN A WEEK IS STILL BUT A WEEK...
LET'S TALK ABOUT SHAFT NUMBER SEVEN--
WHAT?! NO!!
YE LAID OUT THE DEAL AND I MET MY END!! YOU'VE YER GAS AND NOW I WANT MY ANSWERS!!
WHAT'S THIS...? LABOR DISPUTE IN THE LAND OF PLENTY? TSK TSK...

DOOMDOOMDOOMDOOM

chris bachalo & joe kelly creators
richard friend inks studio f colors
comicraft's rich'n'saida letters john layman edits

NEXT: THE WORLD FALLS AGAIN!

part two

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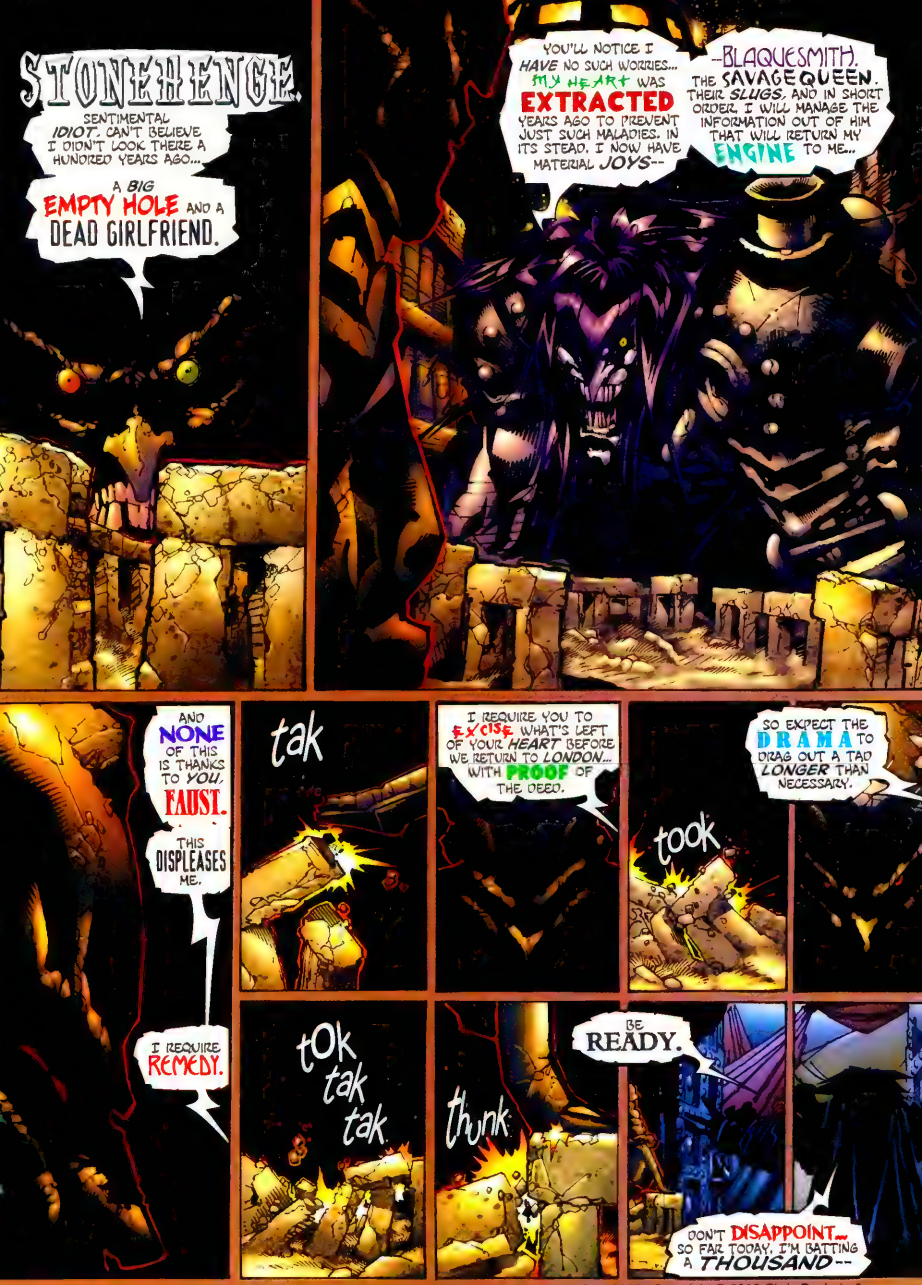
STONEHENGE.
SENTIMENTAL IDIOT. CAN'T BELIEVE I DIDN'T LOOK THERE A HUNDRED YEARS AGO...
A BIG EMPTY HOLE AND A DEAD GIRLFRIEND.
YOU'LL NOTICE I HAVE NO SUCH WORRIES... MY HEART WAS EXTRACTED YEARS AGO TO PREVENT JUST SUCH MALADIES. IN ITS STEAD, I NOW HAVE MATERIAL JOYS--
--BLAQUESMITH. THE SAVAGE QUEEN. THEIR SLUGS. AND IN SHORT ORDER, I WILL MANAGE THE INFORMATION OUT OF HIM THAT WILL RETURN MY ENGINE TO ME...
AND NONE OF THIS IS THANKS TO YOU, FAUST.
THIS DISPLEASES ME.
I REQUIRE REMEDY.
tak
I REQUIRE YOU TO EXCISE WHAT'S LEFT OF YOUR HEART BEFORE WE RETURN TO LONDON... WITH PROOF OF THE DEED.
took
SO EXPECT THE DRAMA TO DRAG OUT A TAD LONGER THAN NECESSARY.
tOk tak tak
thunk
BE READY.
DON'T DISAPPOINT... SO FAR TODAY, I'M BATTING A THOUSAND--

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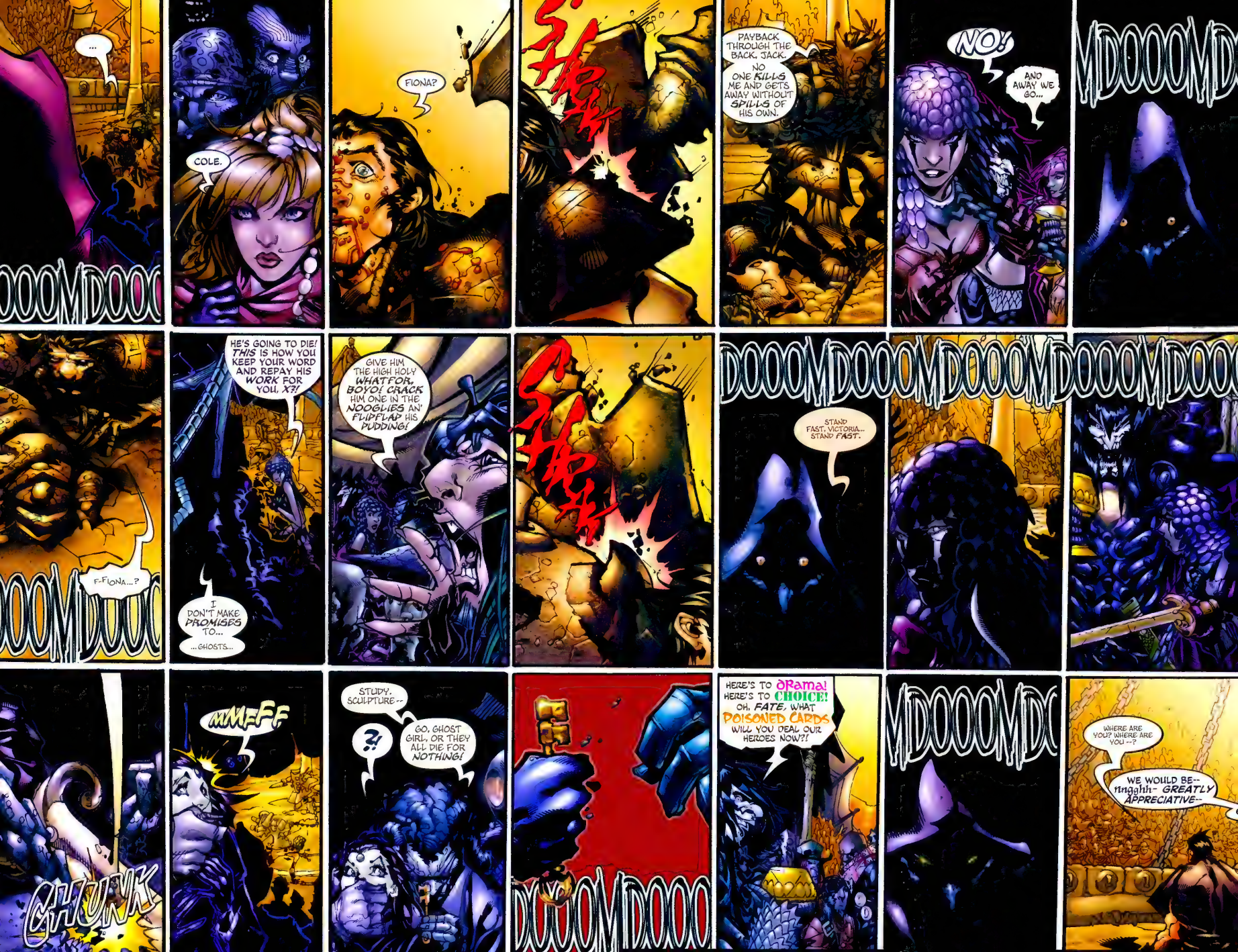
-AREN'T I, BOYS AND GIRLS?!
I THOUGHT WE WERE CLEAN WITH ONE ANOTHER, ABSINTHE.
THIS DOES NOT FEEL CLEAN, BRADDA.
YOU BETTER WATCH THAT CHOCOLATE MOUTH, "BRADDA"--
--I'D HATE TO HAVE TO SHOOT IT OFF.
PLEASE, 22, DROP THE VOLUME A NOTCH. WE'RE ALL OLD FRIENDS HERE. REUNITED UNDER A COMMON BANNER!
FIGHTING FOR THE GOOD OF THE MOTHERLAND BY TRIMMING HER RAMPANT WEEDS...
I SIMPLY WANT TO KNOW WHY MY OLD FRIEND DIDN'T TELL ME HE'D GONE GARDENING WITH SUCH ABUNDANT SUCCESS.
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE LOOKING FOR HIM, SIR.
BLAQUESMITH? NO, HOW COULD YOU HAVE? THAT MISSIVE I TRANSMITTED TO ALL BORDER CITIES COULD HAVE BEEN ABOUT ANY NUMBER OF STRAPPING MANIMATRONIC BLOKES WANDERING THE COUNTRYSIDE.

AND WITH THIS DARK COMPLEXION OF HIS, I COULD SEE HOW YOU MIGHT MISTAKE HIM FOR A "BROTHA."
KLANK
HE TOOK OUT MY MEN. HE BROUGHT BLOOD TO THE CHASM. I WANTED PAYBACK...
...AND I DIDN'T REALIZE HE WAS YOURS... SIR.
NEXT TIME, TAKE OFF THE SPECTACLES. IT WILL HELP YOU SEE YOUR SITUATION MORE clearly--
SHRANK
--THAT YOU ARE AN UPSTART SERVANT BOY WITH A HEAD FOR BUSINESS AND A DOUBLE SET OF ARMS I created for him.
YOU MIGHT EVEN REMEMBER THAT I SENT YOU YOUR "K" SLAVES FILLED WITH HEADS OF NONSENSE SO THAT THEY MIGHT WORK HARDER IN THE MINE UNDER THE DELUSION THEY ARE ARGG.
YOU ARE MINE, SLAVE. FORGET IT. AND I'LL HAVE ANOTHER Trained Monkey IN YOUR PLACE BY SUNDOWN. DIG?
THE correct RESPONSE IS, "YASSAH, WHATEVA YOU SAY, MASSA BIG MAN."
WHAT DO YOU NEED FROM ME...
...MASTER?
GOOD BOY... I NEED YOU TO GATHER UP HIS HORDE, AND MEET ME IN YOUR BOX.
THERE IS ANOTHER I NEED TO PUT IN HIS PLACE BEFORE WE LEAVE THIS GHETTO.
WHO'S YOUR BEST FIGHTER?

...
WHERE ARE YOU, MAN? WAS MY LETTER NOT CLEAR ENOUGH?
CAN YE NOT AWAY--?
HEY! THERE'S A CHALLENGE ON! A CHALLENGE!
IT'S THE BIG WHITE BOY!
AN' ABSINTHE'S COME TO WATCH HIM GO DOWN!
NO. GOD, NO.
"ASSUMING YOU'RE NOT AS HALF-WITTED AS YOUR GENERAL DEMEANOR MIGHT SUGGEST, YOU MAY BE WONDERING--
" 'ABE? WHY SUCH A BELLIGERENT DISPLAY OF MACHISMO? WHY NOT JUST GUT THE BUGGER AND MOVE ON?
" 'ISN'T THE [illegible] YOU SEEK OF SIGNIFICANTLY MORE IMPORT THAN SWINGING YOUR PHALANGE AROUND?' TO WHIT, I RESPOND...
OOOMDOOOMDOOOM

FIRSTLY, I HAVE THE "JOINT SURROUNDED," AND MY GOOD FRIEND, MISTER X, HAS BEEN SO KIND TO LOCK DOWN ALL EGRESSESS FROM THE HOLE--
--SECONDLY, I KNOW EXACTLY HOW MUCH FUEL THE FISHERMAN'S CHEST HAS BEEN PACKED WITH, AND EXACTLY WHEN HIS BODY WILL BE RENDERED INERT, SO I AM IN NO DANGER OF LOSING MY QUARRY.
DOOOMDOOOMDOOOMDO
AND THIRDLY? FOR THAT TERTIARY TREAT, WE'D NEED TO ASK FAUST.
NOTICED HIM ABOUT, VICKI? BEEN CHATTING, HAVE WE? I WONDER WHAT YE HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...?
I WONDER IF THEY KNOW... EH? DON'T TELL ANYONE THIS, BUT WATCHING YOU SQUIRM...
...MY KNICKERS ARE GETTING TIGHT.
A GAME TO DETERMINE MY STATION...
THIS DAY WILL MARK A BAPTISM, TO BE CERTAIN.
I WELCOME THE BLOOD...
FOOLS! ALL OF YOU! CHEERING FOR HIS PLEASURE AS HE STEPS ON YOUR NECK!
IT MATTERS NOT. AS THE BODIES AND THE LIES STACK BEFORE ME -- I WILL OVERCOME! I WILL OVERCOME, AND FIND--


...
COLE.
FIONA?
SHRK
PAYBACK THROUGH THE BACK, JACK.
NO ONE KILLS ME AND GETS AWAY WITHOUT SPILLS OF HIS OWN.
NO!
AND AWAY WE GO...
MDOOOMD
OOOMDOOO
F-FIONA...?
HE'S GOING TO DIE! THIS IS HOW YOU KEEP YOUR WORD AND REPAY HIS WORK FOR YOU, X?!
I DON'T MAKE PROMISES TO...
...GHOSTS...
GIVE HIM THE HIGH HOLY WHATFOR, BOYO! CRACK HIM ONE IN THE NOOGLIES AN' FLIPFLAP HIS PUDDING!
SHRK
DOOOMDOOOMDOOOMDOOOMDOO
STAND FAST, VICTORIA... STAND FAST.
CHUNK
MMFFF
STUDY, SCULPTURE--
?!
GO, GHOST GIRL, OR THEY ALL DIE FOR NOTHING!
DOOOMDOOO
HERE'S TO DRama! HERE'S TO CHOICE! OH, FATE, WHAT POISONED CARDS WILL YOU DEAL OUR HEROES NOW?!
MDOOOMDO
WHERE ARE YOU? WHERE ARE YOU --?
WE WOULD BE-- Hnggh- GREATLY APPRECIATIVE--

CHANG
--IF YOU'D GET OFF YOUR BACKSIDE AND FIGHT WITH US, BOY!!
VICTORIA?
'ALF A BAG ON THE GHOST GIRL AN' LAD... ANY TAKERS?
GIMME SOME OF THAT!
THACK
THOUP
KRRKK
FLIPP
FWIP

CRIKEY... THAT GEL REALLY CAN THROW ONE, CAN'T SHE?
OH GOD. PLEASE DIE. PLEEEEEASE DIE.
CHEATERS NEVER WIN, 'SPECIALLY WHEN THEY SIN--
--'SPECIALLY 'GAINST ME.
SHAKK!
AUUGH!
LET THE PAINS BE--
AYE.
LET THE PAIN BEGIN.
@%#$$
@%#$$ IS RIGHT. PLEASURE, MATE.

VICTORIA.

nnnghhh!

HE HURT YOU. CAN YE STAND?

I --

CAN YE FIGHT?

COLE...

COLE... LOOK AT ME.

WH-WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

DON'T SPEAK. DON'T.

SCANDALOUS...

WHAT WOULD "DEAR FIONA" THINK? WHAT WOULD "DEAR FAUST--"

B-BREAK IT U-UP YOU T-TWO...

...THE BATTLE ISSSN'T--

SPLIIIT

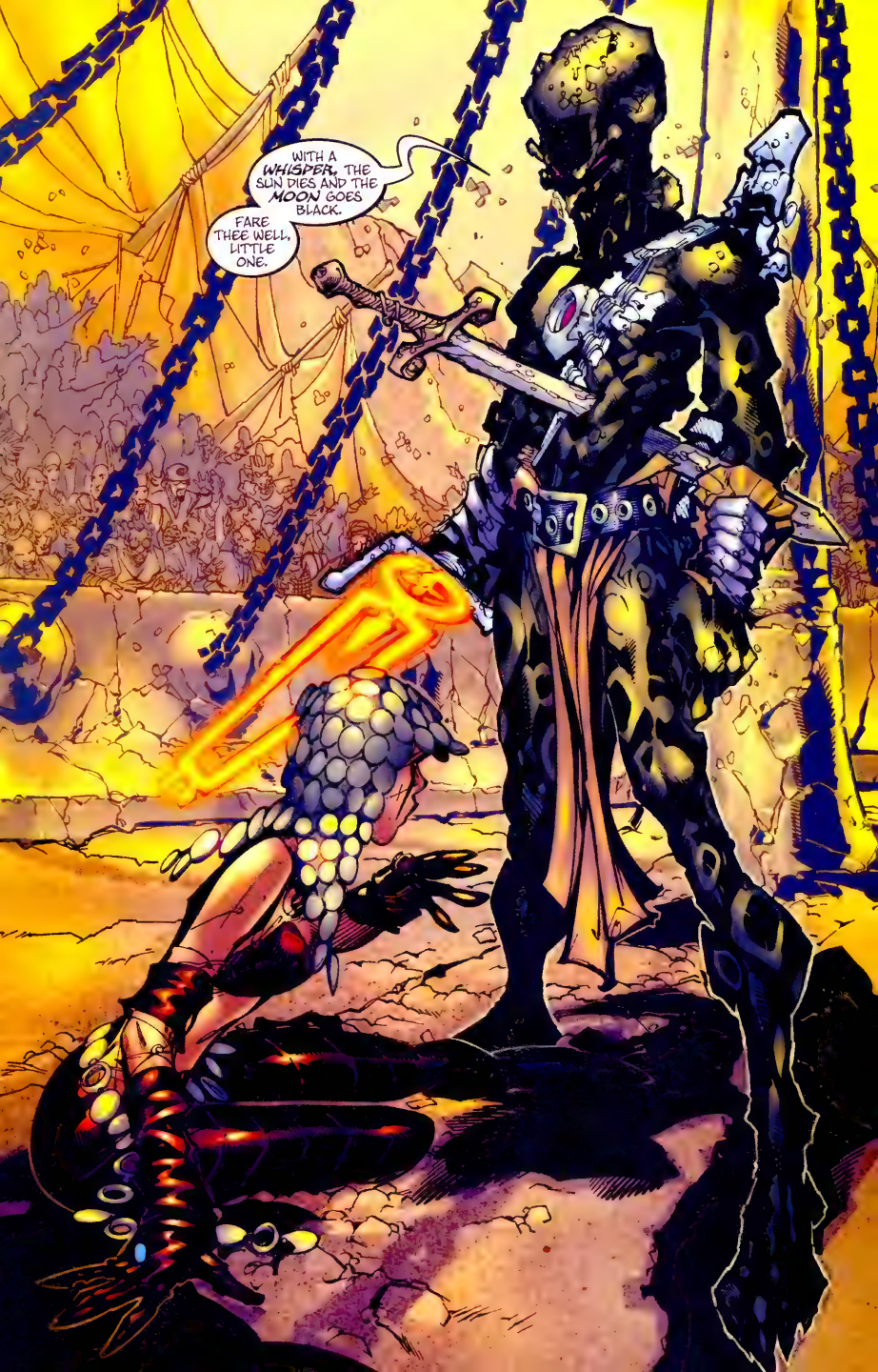
--THROUGH...

AND THE WIND SHUFFLES SECRETS YET AGAIN WITH HER WISPY EYES AND COLD COLD LIPS.
EN GARDE, GOOD KNIGHT.
EN GARDE.

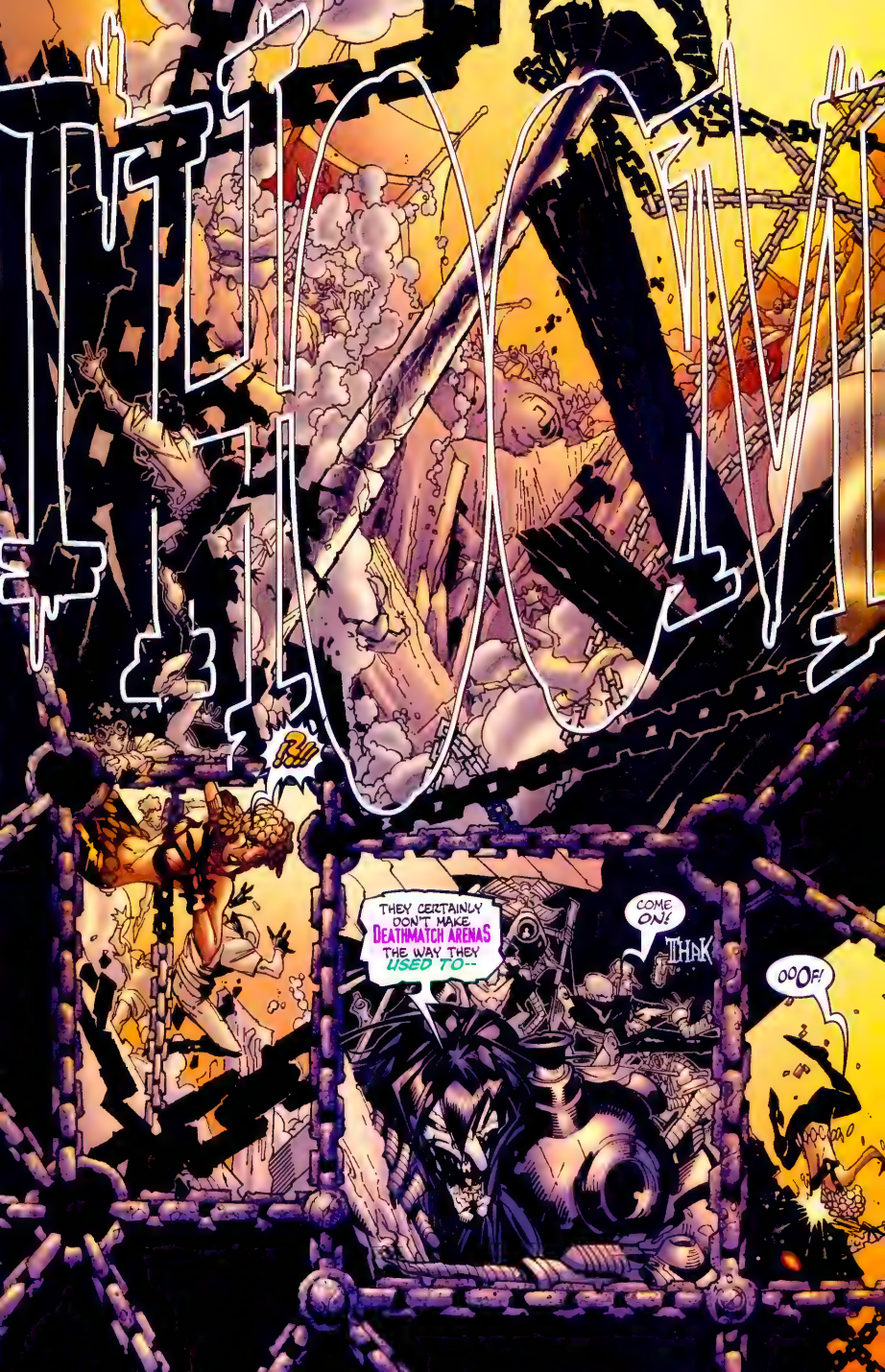
WHAT BLASTED STATUE?!
WHERE?!
KRUNCH
AND WHY ME?!
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT AFRO-BRITISH CULTURE! MAYBE "STATUE" IS SLANG FOR "A GLASS OF WATER!" MAYBE THIS KEY IS MEANT FOR HIS EIGHT-LEGGED HORSE! WHO KNOWS?!
LASLO IS THE ONE! WHERE IS HE WHEN I'M HAVING A MULTI-CULTURAL CRISIS?!
KRRRENCHHH
ALL I WANT IS TO LEARN SOME REAL LONDON SCIENCE! THIS IS HOT WHAT I SIGNED ON FOR! I--
I...
I...
?!
I'M A HERO.

I HAVE FORESEEN THIS BATTLE... I PROMISED YOU.
PROPHECY AND PAIN.
STOP TALKING AND FIGHT, YOU UGLY BASTARD.
ARE YOU PREPARED TO LIE DOWN WITH FATE, BRUTALLY?
YES! DO IT! BLOOD! BLOOD!
COLE! GOD, COLE!
FSSSSH!
KRRNKLLL
FAUST. OH, THA'S IT, LASLO. DEAD, AN' I NE'ER EVEN GOT TO SEE PARIS...
THE MUSIC... DO YOU HEAR...? I SHOULD... I SHOULD DO SOMETHING. I --
NOT YET, L'IL BRA'. PATIENCE.
I HAVE TO HAND IT TO YOU, X. YOU HAVE THEM WELL TRAINED. BLOOD SPORT ALWAYS HELPS IF THE RABBLE FORGET THEIR WOES.
AND TO THINK, LONDONERS CATEGORIZE YOUR KIND AS SAVAGES, THE NERVE!
SHHH
THOOM
YOUR HEART TIRES, BLAQUESMITH. SOON IT WILL STOP. AND YOUR WORLD WILL GREY...
HNNGH!
BUT YOU WILL NOT PERISH UNTIL I SEE IT IN YOUR EYES. THE KNOWLEDGE. THE CLENCH OF A FROZEN HEART.
I WANT YOU TO KNOW HOW IT FEELS, TO LIVE IN THE NUMBNESS... BECAUSE YOU'VE ALREADY STOPPED MY HEART DEAD.
NO.

WE HAVE GROWN... ACCUSTOMED TO THE BOY BREATHING.
VICTORIA... MY LITTLE DRAGON. PLEASE--
EN GARDE.
"BLOOD WILL CROSS. SWORDS WILL SPILL." SO SPITES AND WRITES THE WORLD. VERY WELL.
EN GARDE.
THAP
THUNK
WELL LOOK AT THAT. THE EUNUCH FOUND A BALL TUCKED UP THERE AFTER ALL.
MISS VICKI...
V-VICTORIA...


WITH A WHISPER, THE SUN DIES AND THE MOON GOES BLACK.
FARE THEE WELL, LITTLE ONE.

PSSH
ssSh
THACK
HE CAN FIRE BULLETS?
OH, YEAH... NOW I RECALL...
oOps.
NOW.
KKRRNCH


THUMP
THEY CERTAINLY DON'T MAKE DEATHMATCH ARENAS THE WAY THEY USED TO--
COME ON!
THAK
OOF!

COLE -- mnghh...
CHOMP CHOMP
COLE. WAKE UP. PLEASE WAKE UP. PLEASE...
I WANT TO TELL YOU I LOVE YOU BEFORE WE ALL DIE.
ATTENTION ALL RENEGADES AND WOULD-BE ESCAPEES!
THIS IS NOT A DRILL! GET YOUR BUMS UP HERE!!
YES... THAT SOUNDED CONFIDENT... AND HEROIC. BULLY FOR ME.

AND YOU WANTED TO LEAVE HER HOME.
ANYONE CAN MAKE A MISTAKE... EXCEPT YOU, RIGHT THIS SECOND-- JUMP!!
NO! NO! I WILL NOT BE OUTDONE BY THAT FISHERMAN AGAIN!
WASN'T THE FISHERMAN, DID YOU IN, "MASSA"...
WAS THE SLAVE, WHO HE REMINDED HOW TO LIVE.
BAM BAM BAM
BOOM
KYO!!
LITTLE DRAGON, SLEEPING, SLEEPING... WAKE.
YOUR LORD, ONCE MORE, YOUR FACE WOULD TAKE...
...INTO HIS HAND, SO OLD AND WORN...
TO SEE YOUR EYES IGNITE... REBORN.
KNOW THIS, LITTLE ONE...
IN THE NEXT LIFE, WHEN STARS CROSS US TOGETHER ONCE MORE...

KADOOOM
...IT WILL BE AS ENEMIES.
PRAY YOUR HALF A MAN WAS WORTH IT.
ANYONE EVER TOLD YOU YOU'RE GORGEOUS WHEN YOU SAVE MY LIFE?
LATER. WE HAVE PEOPLE TO SAVE.
CLUNK
NO... I WAS SO CLOSE... SO CLOSE...
OH, COLE...
IT'S WHAT ONE MIGHT CALL A BAD DAY ALL 'ROUND, AIN'T IT, TOOTS?

next:

COMPLEX NAPOLEON!

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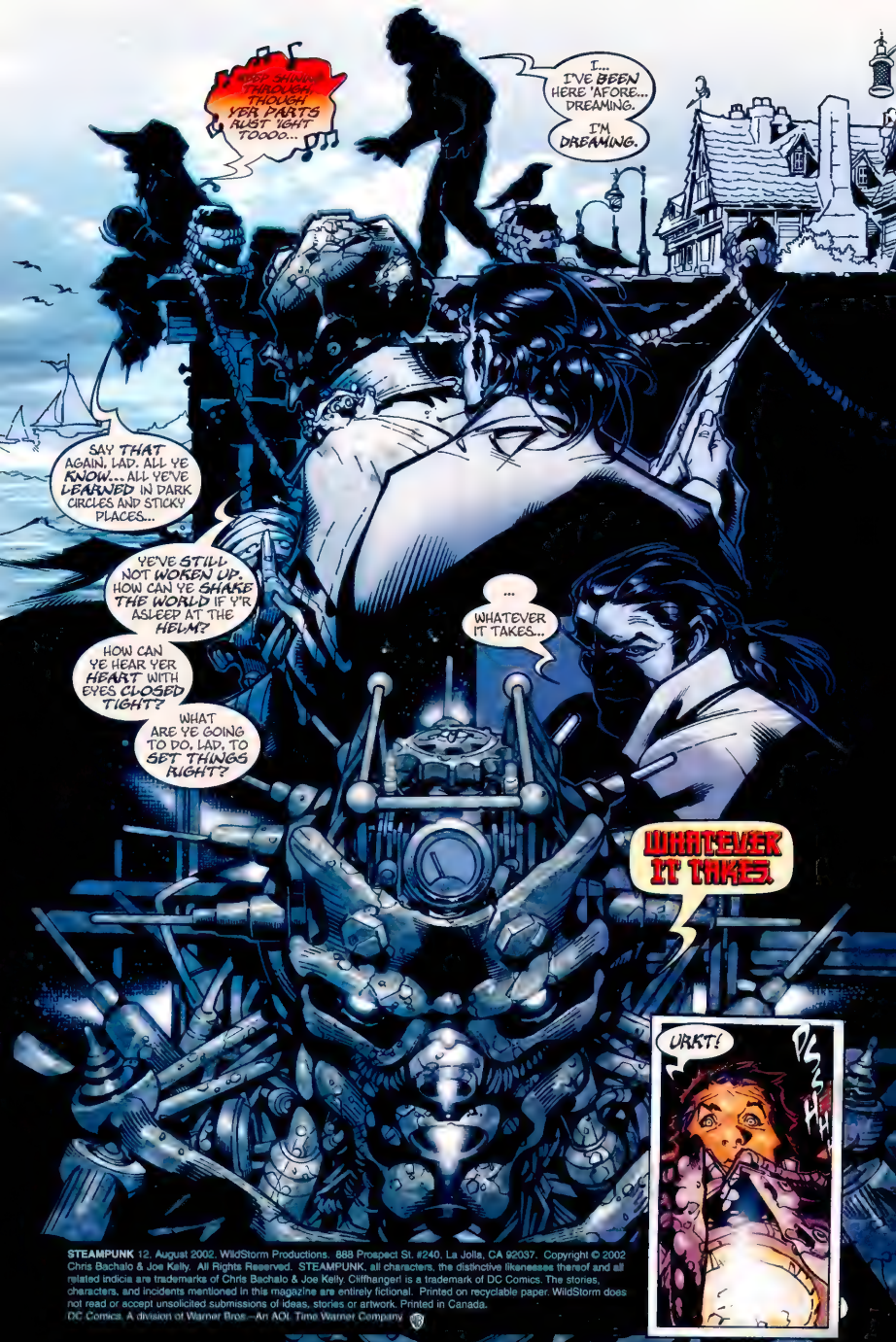
WE'LL MEET AGAIN, DON'T KNOW WHERE, DON'T KNOW WHENNN, BUT I KNOW WE'LL MEET AGAIN SOME SUNNY DAYYYY!
CREATED BY JOE KELLY WRITER
CREATED BY CHRIS BACHALO ARTIST
COMPLEX NAPOLEON!
IMKS RICHARD FRIEND
COLORS STUDIO F, BACHALO & ROCHELLE
LETTERS RS & COMICRAFT'S SAIDA!
EDITOR JOHN LAYMAN


DEEP SHINING THROUGH, THOUGH YER PARTS RUST 'IGHT TOOOO...
I... I'VE BEEN HERE 'AFORE... DREAMING. I'M DREAMING.
SAY THAT AGAIN, LAD. ALL YE KNOW... ALL YE'VE LEARNED IN DARK CIRCLES AND STICKY PLACES...
YE'VE STILL NOT WOKEN UP. HOW CAN YE SHAKE THE WORLD IF Y'R ASLEEP AT THE HELM?
HOW CAN YE HEAR YER HEART WITH EYES CLOSED TIGHT?
WHAT ARE YE GOING TO DO, LAD, TO SET THINGS RIGHT?
... WHATEVER IT TAKES...
WHATEVER IT TAKES.
URKT!
PSHH

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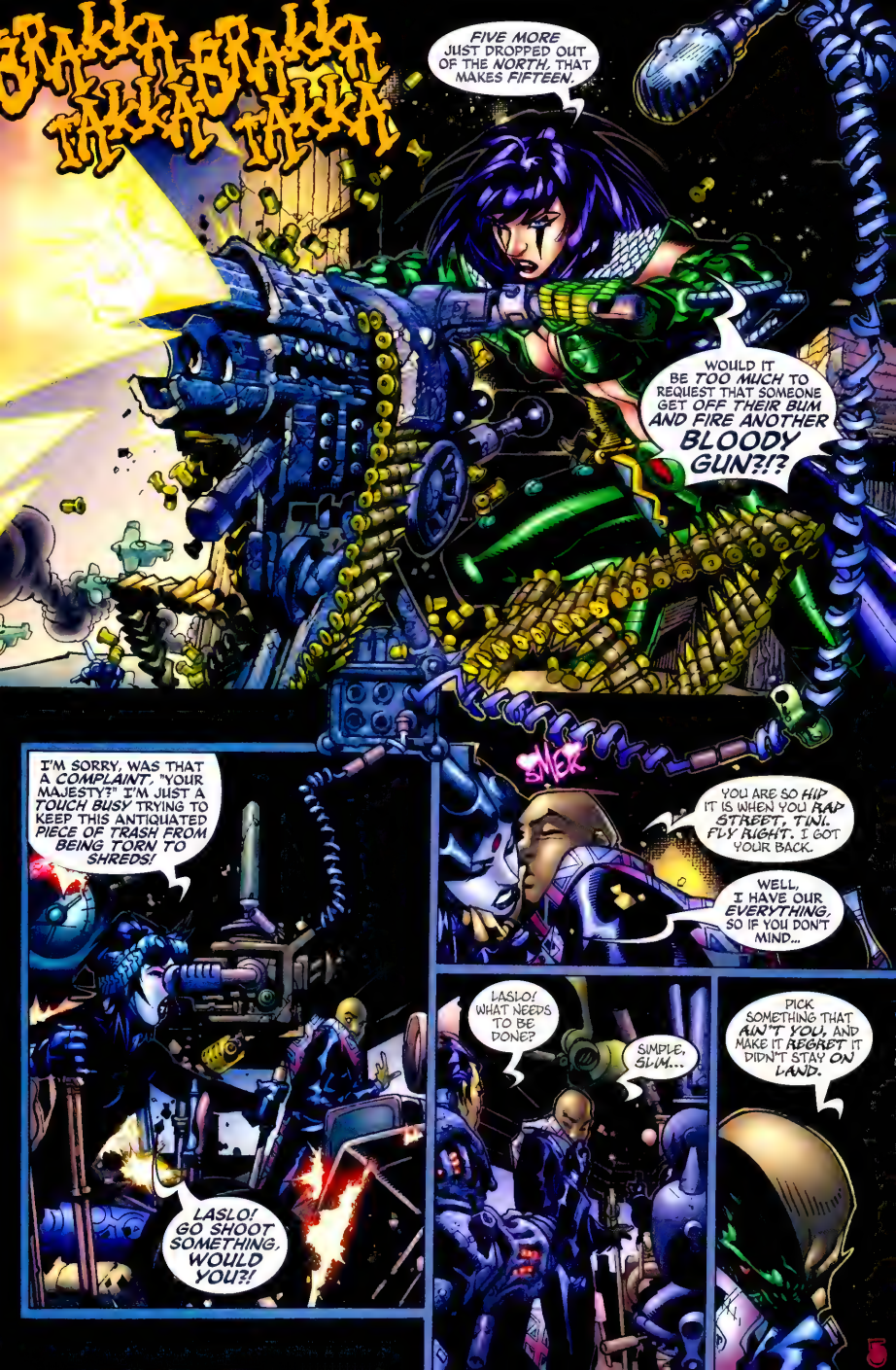
R-RANDY...
AN' THAT, YE PINFEATHER, IS WHAT I'M JAWIN' 'BOUT. MIRACLES. SURE. TIMES AIN'T BEEN WHAT YE CALL LOLLIPOPPISH SINCE WE FOUND THE OL' COVE, BUT THINK ABOUT ALL WE SEEN AN' DONE.
WE'RE WALKIN' MIRACLES, 'SPECIALLY THIS ONE...CAST OFF LAZARUS BACK FROM THE BIG SLEEP.
WELCOME BACK, BOYO. DON'T RUSH UP OR ANYTHING. WE'RE JUST BEING HUNTED LIKE DOGS WHILE YOU'RE ENJOYING YOUR NOD.
IGNORE 'IM. 'E GETS LIKE THIS WHENEVER WE FLY. 'E'S GOT WING ENVY.
WH-WHERE'S VICTORIA--?
FWOOM
'AVE A GUESS, MATE.

WE WOULD CARE TO LODGE A FORMAL COMPLAINT REGARDING THESE TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS!
BRAKKA THAKKA THAKKA
POOM POOM
PWHOOM


BRAKKA-BRAKKA TAKKA-TAKKA
FIVE MORE JUST DROPPED OUT OF THE NORTH, THAT MAKES FIFTEEN.
WOULD IT BE TOO MUCH TO REQUEST THAT SOMEONE GET OFF THEIR BUM AND FIRE ANOTHER BLOODY GUN?!?
SMACK
YOU ARE SO HIP IT IS WHEN YOU RAP STREET, TINI. FLY RIGHT. I GOT YOUR BACK.
WELL, I HAVE OUR EVERYTHING, SO IF YOU DON'T MIND...
I'M SORRY, WAS THAT A COMPLAINT, "YOUR MAJESTY?" I'M JUST A TOUCH BUSY TRYING TO KEEP THIS ANTIQUATED PIECE OF TRASH FROM BEING TORN TO SHREDS!
LASLO! GO SHOOT SOMETHING, WOULD YOU?!
LASLO! WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?
SIMPLE, SLIM...
PICK SOMETHING THAT AIN'T YOU, AND MAKE IT REGRET IT DIDN'T STAY ON LAND.

KA-CRASH
SAVE SOME FOR ME! ALL THAT "BOY" THIS AND "X" THAT SIVE AT THE MINES LEFT ME WANTING BLOOD!
YOURS FOR THE TAKING...
SLEET
UCENIC.
I WANT TO TALK TO YOU. ABOUT WHAT YOU SAID IN THE ARENA.
CERTAINLY. POUR US SOME TEA AND WE'LL HAVE A LOVELY CHAT. ARE YOU DAFT?! WE'RE FIGHTING HERE!
PKTANNG
PKOW
PROMISE ME.
WE PROMISE.
WILL YOU BREAK SOMETHING NOW?
OF COURSE.

WHO YOU CALLIN' "BOY?!?"
BRAKKA BRAKKA
CLOSSSSING IN ON THEM, LORD ABSIN'THE. SUCCESS IS IMMINENT.
I DOUBT IT. IN FACT, I IMAGINE YOU'RE ALREADY DEAD. BUT I'LL THREATEN YOU ANYWAY.
BRING THEM DOWN, ON OUR SOIL, OR I'LL WEAR YOU AS A PAIR OF SEWER SLIPS.
BY THE WAY... BEHIND YOU.
YESSS, SSSSIR--?
KLANG
NOOO!
GO HOME.
KATHSH

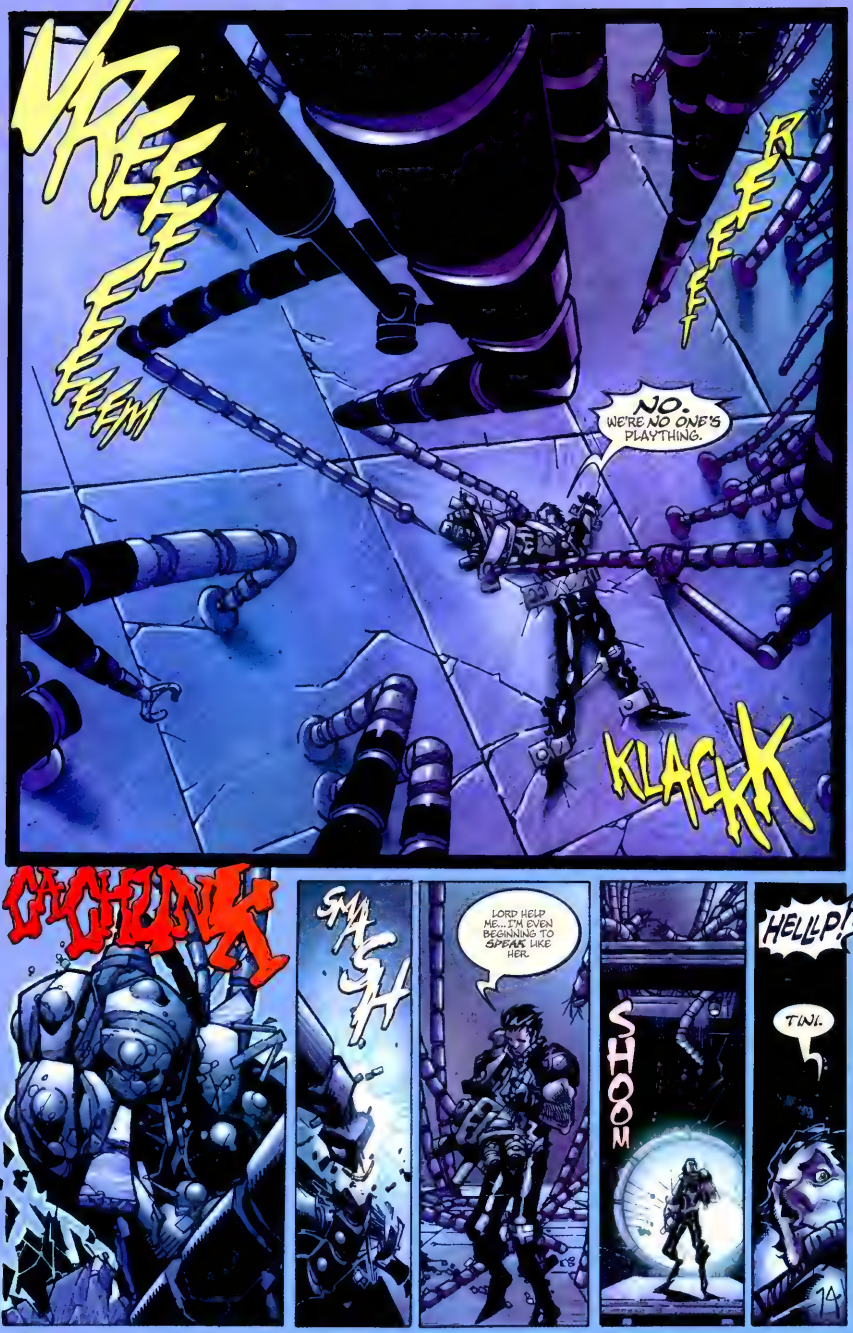
BRACKA BRACKA BRACKA
FRANCE. TINI, STEER THIS CAN TOWARDS FRANCE! I HAVE AN IDEA!
BRE'S ONE RIGHT IN THE STINK-KETTLE FOR YE, DOG! NO ONE TAKES US ALIVE!
GADS. A LITTLE GUNPLAY AN' E'S GONE NATIVE.
THEY WON'T FOLLOW US INTO FRANC-- GHCHH
WHOOO WHOOO WHOOO
WHAT'S IN FRANCE? LASLO?! I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT I'VE SET COURSE FOR!
LASLO!!
NO NEED T' YELL, LASS. WE'RE RIGHT HERE.
WHAT?! WHY AREN'T--
NO.
'E'S BEEN HIT, I RECKON. BUT THERE'S NO BLOOD T' BE SEEN.

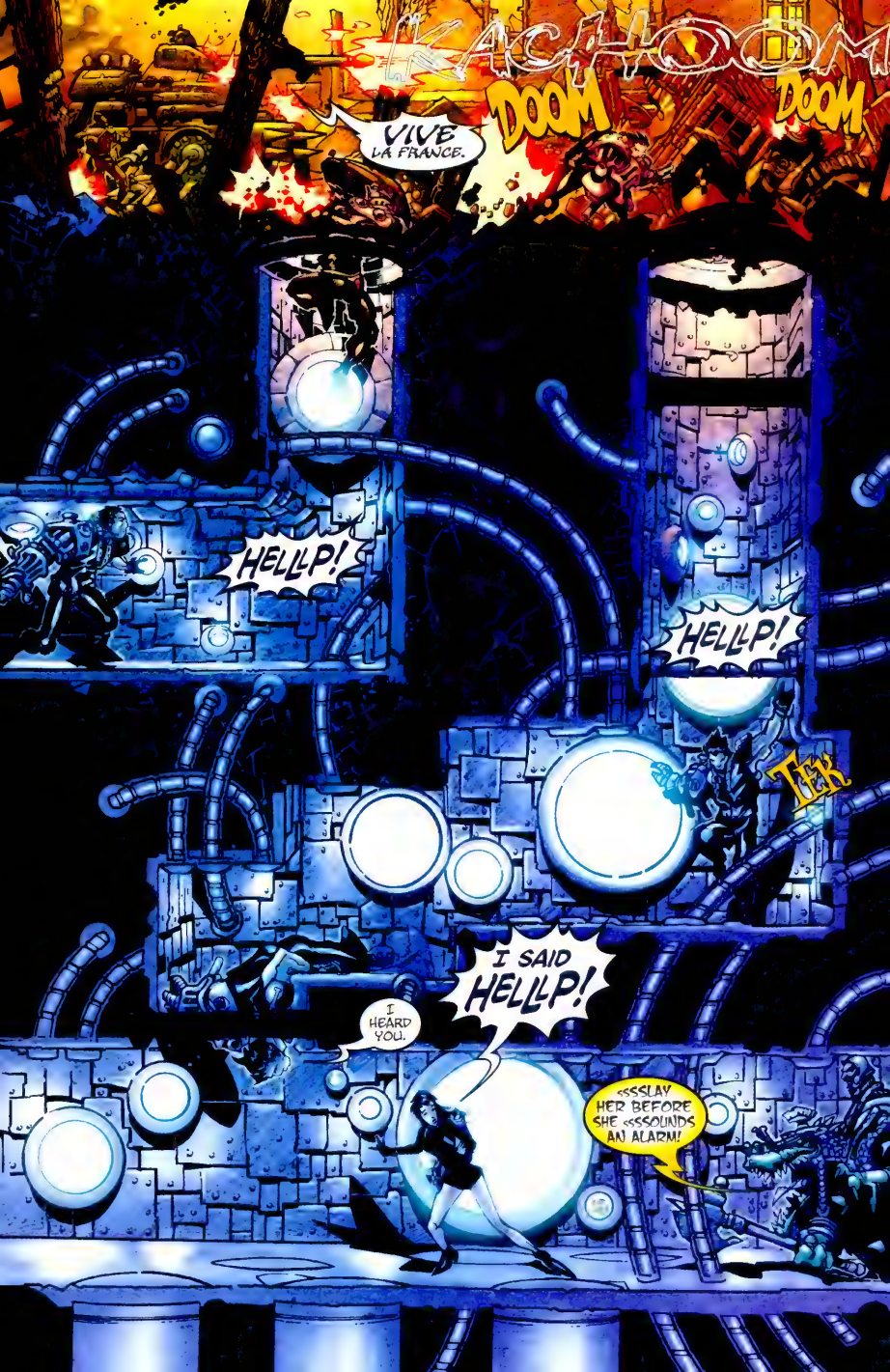
THINK THAT SCARF GOT BLOOD ON IT?
WAIT 'TIL THE BODY'S COLD, WHY DON'T YE?
LASLO! CAN YOU HEAR ME? WHERE ARE YOU HIT?
I-I'M FINE, KITTEN... A HEADACHE'S ALL.
SEE? NO WORRIES.
STEER.
BADOOM

BRAKKA BRAKKA BRAKKA
THAP
YOU LEFT US SOME? SOME GENTLEMAN YOU ARE.
...
WE ARE CONCERNED THAT THIS WARBIRD MAY NOT SEE THE END OF THE FRAY THE WAY SHE'S BEEN--
DID YOU SAY THAT YOU LOVED ME?
...
FUPDPU FUPDPU FUPDPU FUPDPU
BUGGER.

SHAKATTA ATTA ATTA
<PERIMETER AIR ACTIVITY DETECTED. ABSINTHIAN SHIPS PENETRATING BORDERS.>
<Deploy contact team. Deploy anti-aircraft measures.>
<TARGETING. CANNONADES LOCKED. FIRING.>
<CONTACT. ONE ENEMY SHIP DESTROYED. TARGETING SECOND SHIP...>
<TARGETING. CANNONADES LOCKED. FIRING.>
<CONTACT. THIRTY-FIVE PERCENT DAMAGE. THE ENEMY SHIP WILL LAND ON FRENCH SOIL.>
<Deploy retrieval team. The war continues.>
VIVE LA FRANCE.

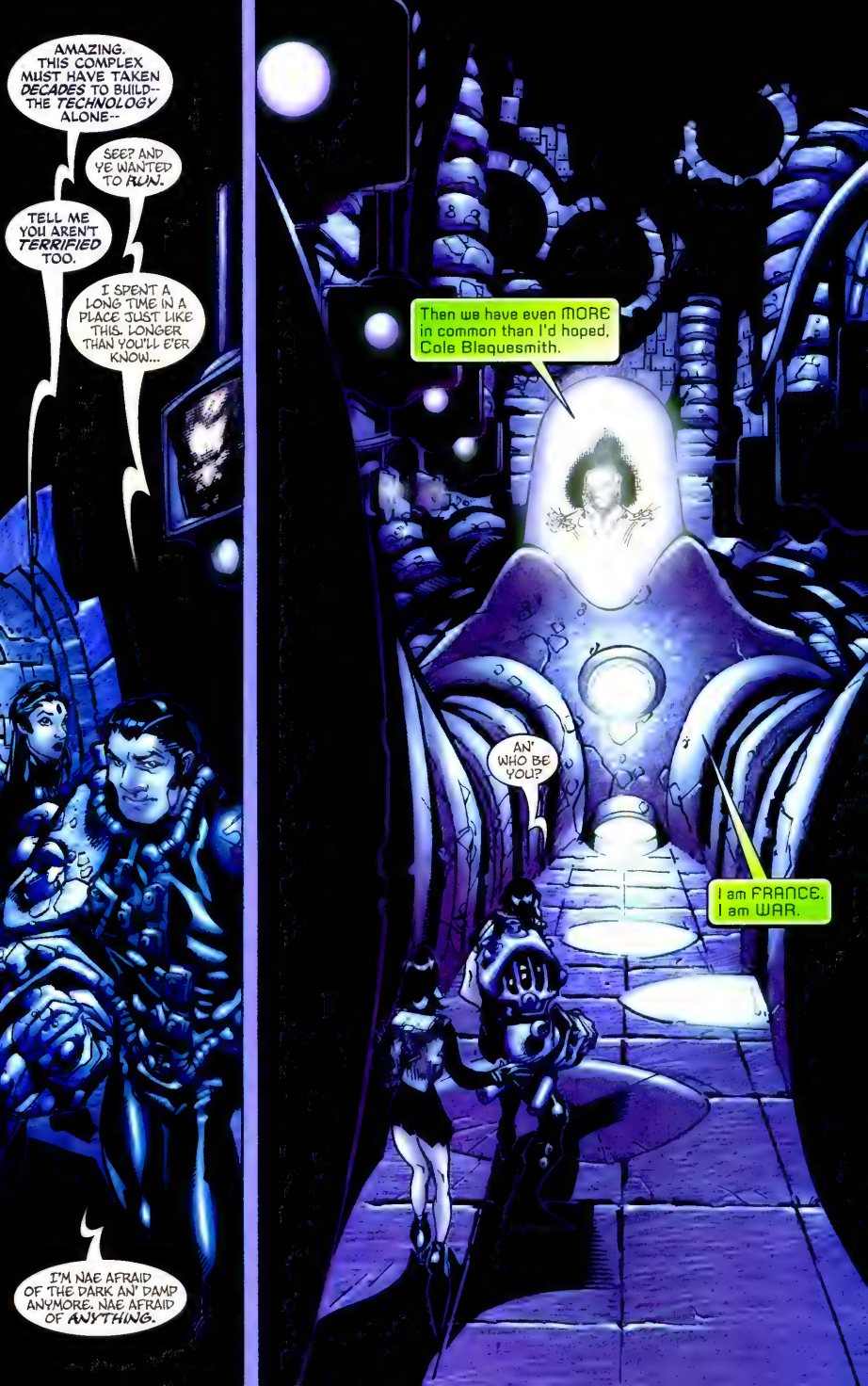
DO YOU TRULY BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN SUCCEED, COLE?
PLAYING WITH TIME AS A CHILD WOULD WOODEN BLOCKS?
STONEHENGE IS GONE. I AM--
I SAW YOU, FIONA. SAW YOU WITH MY OWN EYES IN THE ARENA.
IT... IT COULD NAE HAVE BEEN IN MY MIND... I--
BUT COLE... SWEET COLE...
I AM DEAD. SO VERY DEAD AND SO VERY VERY FAR AWAY.
WHILE YOU WASTE YOUR LIFE SEARCHING FOR GHOSTS...
...LOVE BLOOMS BESIDE YOU.
SQUEEEK
SQRREE


VREEEEEEEEEEM
RREEEEEEEEEEM
NO. WE'RE NO ONE'S PLAYTHING.
KLACK
CA-CHUNK
SMASH
LORD HELP ME... I'M EVEN BEGINNING TO SPEAR LIKE HER.
SHOOM
HELLP!
TWI.

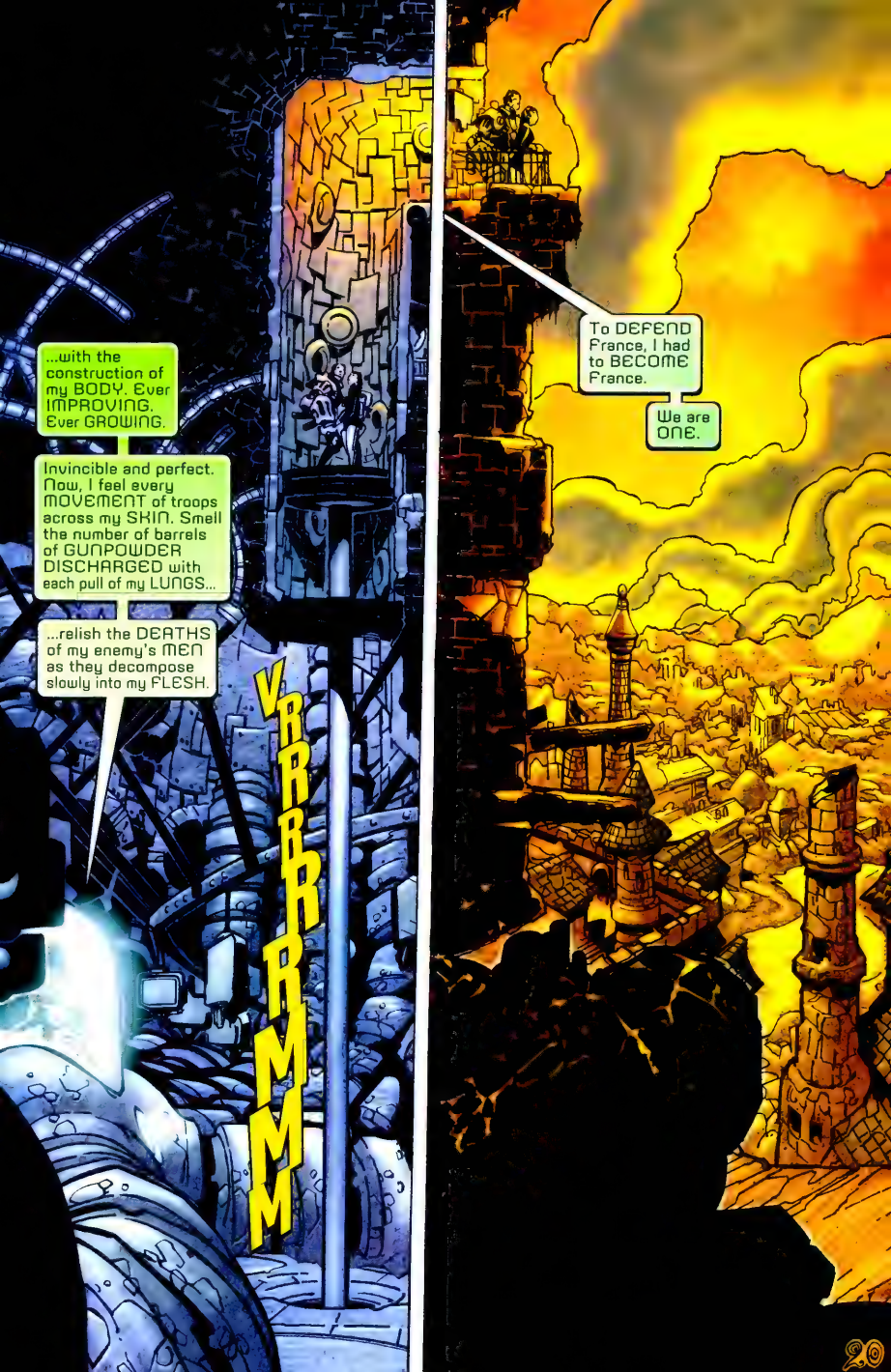

KACHOOM
DOOM
DOOM
VIVE LA FRANCE.
HELLP!
HELLP!
TEK
I SAID HELLP!
I HEARD YOU.
SSSLAY HER BEFORE SHE SSSOUNDS AN ALARM!

WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?
I DON'T KNOW, I--
DON'T KILL THEM! THEY CAN LEAD US TO THE CENTER!
KLIKT KLIKT KLIKT
THE GUN. IS IT BROKEN?
EMPTY, YOU DOLT! IT'S--
HNGH!
SSPIESSS: DON'T TRUSSST THEM.
PRETTY. YOU FRENCH KISS?
I CAN ASSURE YOU, WE'RE ENGLISH--
RIGHT... OUVREZ VOTRE BOUCHE.
YOU HAVE ONE CHANCE TO LIVE UNSKINNED, DOG! TAKE US TO NAPOLEON!!
GYEAAAHH!!!
NAPOLEON?
GOOD GOD. THE WALLS THEMSELVES ARE--

WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
NORMALLY, I'D APPLAUD YOUR SCIENTIFIC CURIOSITY, COLE... BUT INSTEAD, LET'S JUST RUN AS FAR AWAY AS POSSIBLE.
BUT THE OTHERS--?
COLE, IN THIS SATCHEL, I HAVE ALL OF THE INFORMATION WE STOLE FROM MAMBUTU X ON THE LOCATION OF STONEHENGE.
ACCORDING TO YOU, THE KEY TO DEFEATING ABSINTHE-- YOUR ENGINE-- IS AMONG THESE NOTES.
I CONSIDER THEM FRIENDS TOO, COLE, BUT... TRULY... WHAT'S MORE IMPORTANT? THE SOLDIERS OR THE WAR?
...
WE STAY.
AM I THE ONLY PRAGMATIST IN THIS--
<Follow.>
=>gasp<=
Follow.
=>KAFF<=
=>KAFF<=
=>KAFF<=
YE DON'T THINK E'S CONTAGIOUS, DO YE?
NOT A CLUE, SKOMMY... IDEAS, MISS VICKY?
BETTER NOT TO ASK US, RANDY, LEST YOU'RE PREPARED FOR SOUR NEWS. SOMETIMES, THINGS ARE DARKEST BEFORE DAWN...
SOMETIMES THE SUN NEVER COMES.

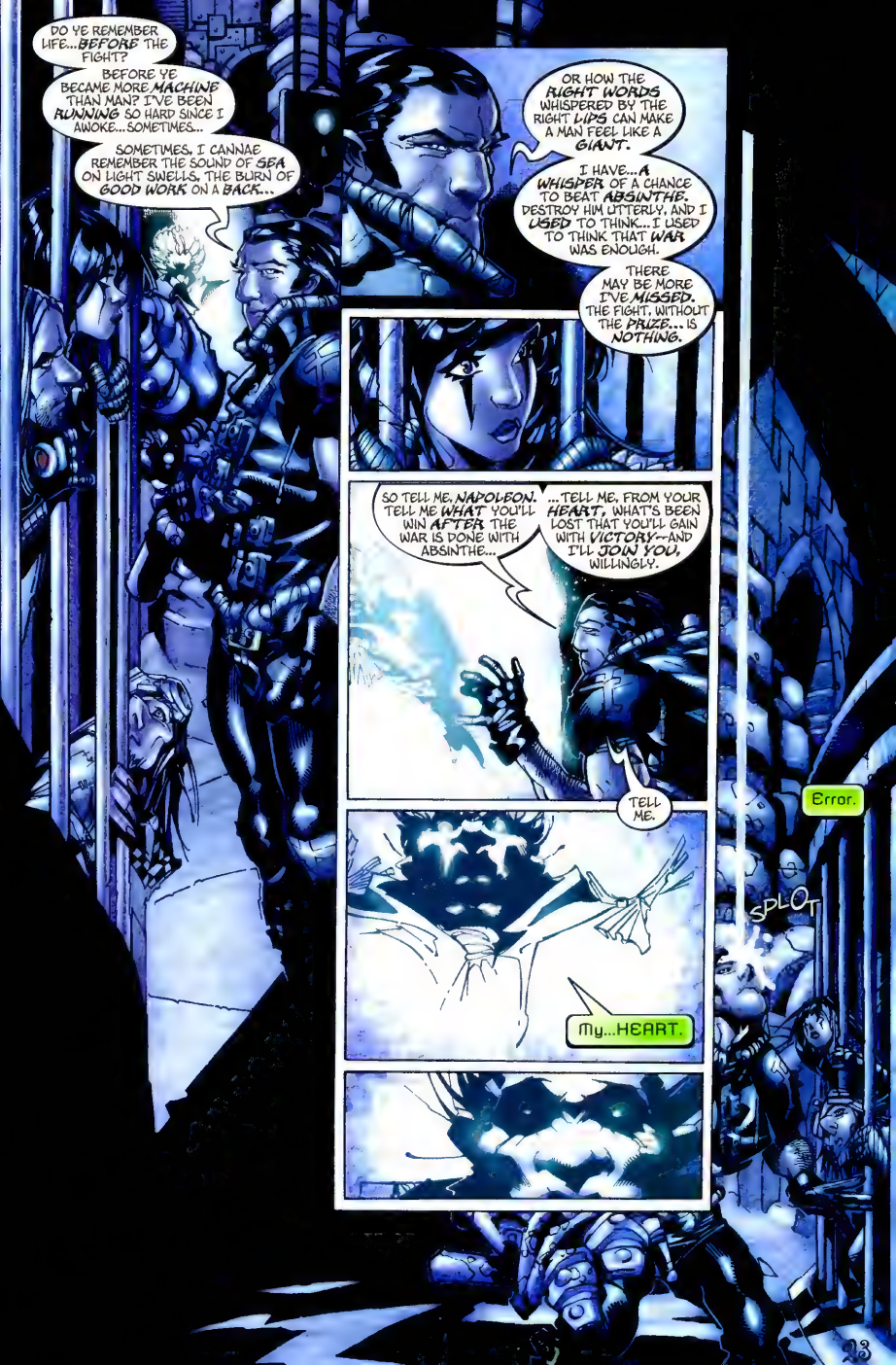

AMAZING. THIS COMPLEX MUST HAVE TAKEN *DECADES* TO BUILD-- THE *TECHNOLOGY* ALONE--
SEEP AND YE WANTED TO *RUN*.
TELL ME YOU AREN'T *TERRIFIED* TOO.
I SPENT A LONG TIME IN A PLACE JUST LIKE THIS. LONGER THAN YOU'LL E'ER KNOW...
I'M NAE AFRAID OF THE DARK AN' DAMP ANYMORE. NAE AFRAID OF *ANYTHING*.
Then we have even MORE in common than I'd hoped, Cole Blaquesmith.
AN' WHO BE YOU?
I am FRANCE. I am WAR.

I am NAPOLEON BONAPARTE... anointed EMPEROR OF HELL.
I LOST both countrymen and kin to Absinthe in the AJACCIO MASSACRE of 1778 when he was but a rogue.
HUNTED RUTHLESSLY by those same forces, I fled to FRANCE and schooled in the ART of WAR, that I might make REVENGE...
...but even with TENS UPON TENS OF THOUSANDS at my command, I could not win ABSINTHE'S BLOOD...
Though he still took MINE...foolish, trouble-some Josephine. It was as if Absinthe was not satisfied to have killed my FAMILY, my MEN, my COUNTRY...
...HE needed my SOUL.
So I traded it away...for WEAPONS. MACHINES. The very POWER that allowed him providence over EUROPE would be MINE, HERE.
The bullet that can KILL ME is not yet cast...I have ASSURED this...


...with the construction of my BODY. Ever IMPROVING. Ever GROWING.
Invincible and perfect. Now, I feel every MOVEMENT of troops across my SKIN. Smell the number of barrels of GUNPOWDER DISCHARGED with each pull of my LUNGS...
...relish the DEATHS of my enemy's MEN as they decompose slowly into my FLESH.
VRRRRRMMM
To DEFEND France, I had to BECOME France.
We are ONE.

WHAT DO YOU WANT OF US, NAPOLEON?
I have but one desire. Eternal, elusive...
...VICTORY.
You are ABSINTHE'S ENEMY. You are one with the MACHINE as I am. You are YOUR WAR.
In these ways, we are BROTHERS-IN-ARMS.
You... UNDERSTAND. I can SEE it.
CHTUNK
THA' SOUNDS LIKE DYIN'.
DON'T STOP YOUR HEART YET.
You will FIGHT FOR ME. You will defend FRANCE against ABSINTHE.
You will PURIFY my land with me.
VRRRRRRM
PERHAPS NOW, RANDY...
"DEFEND" FRANCE? WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, SIR, YOUR BODY IS NO MORE THAN A HUSK POCKMARKED WITH CANNON SHELLS!
WE ON THE OTHER HAND HAVE ACCESS TO A WEAPON THAT MAY DO ABSINTHE SOME DAMAGE--!
THIS WAR IS THE ONLY WAR!
IF YOU DO NOT STAND WITH FRANCE YOU STAND--
HOLD.
...
PLEASE... HOLD.

SINCE I OPENED MY EYES ON THIS HORROR OF A WORLD, I TOO HAVE BEEN HUNTED.
I TOO 'AVE LOST LOVE AND LIFE TO ABSINTHE, IN PART DUE TO MY OWN FOLLY, BUT ONLY IN PART.
I TOO HAVE BEEN FIGHTING MY WAR, BURNING THE FUEL OF HATE...
AND I TIRE OF IT, I'M TIRED.
I WILL NAE BE TAKEN TO ANYTHING BY FORCE; SO IF YOU MEAN FOR ME TO SCRAP FOR MY FREEDOM, I WILL...
NO MATTER HOW BIG YA ARE. NO MATTER HOW STRONG. I'LL FIGHT...
BUT FIRST...
BIG FELLA!
COLE...?
ONE QUESTION... FOR A "BROTHER-IN-ARMS."


DO YE REMEMBER LIFE...BEFORE THE FIGHT?
BEFORE YE BECAME MORE MACHINE THAN MAN? I'VE BEEN RUNNING SO HARD SINCE I AWOKE...SOMETIMES...
SOMETIMES, I CANNAE REMEMBER THE SOUND OF SEA ON LIGHT SWELLS, THE BURN OF GOOD WORK ON A BACK...
OR HOW THE RIGHT WORDS WHISPERED BY THE RIGHT LIPS CAN MAKE A MAN FEEL LIKE A GIANT.
I HAVE...A WHISPER OF A CHANCE TO BEAT ABSINTHE. DESTROY HIM UTTERLY, AND I USED TO THINK...I USED TO THINK THAT WAR WAS ENOUGH.
THERE MAY BE MORE I'VE MISSED. THE FIGHT, WITHOUT THE PRIZE... IS NOTHING.
SO TELL ME, NAPOLEON. TELL ME WHAT YOU'LL WIN AFTER THE WAR IS DONE WITH ABSINTHE...
...TELL ME, FROM YOUR HEART, WHAT'S BEEN LOST THAT YOU'LL GAIN WITH VICTORY--AND I'LL JOIN YOU, WILLINGLY.
TELL ME.
Error.
SPLOT
My...HEART.

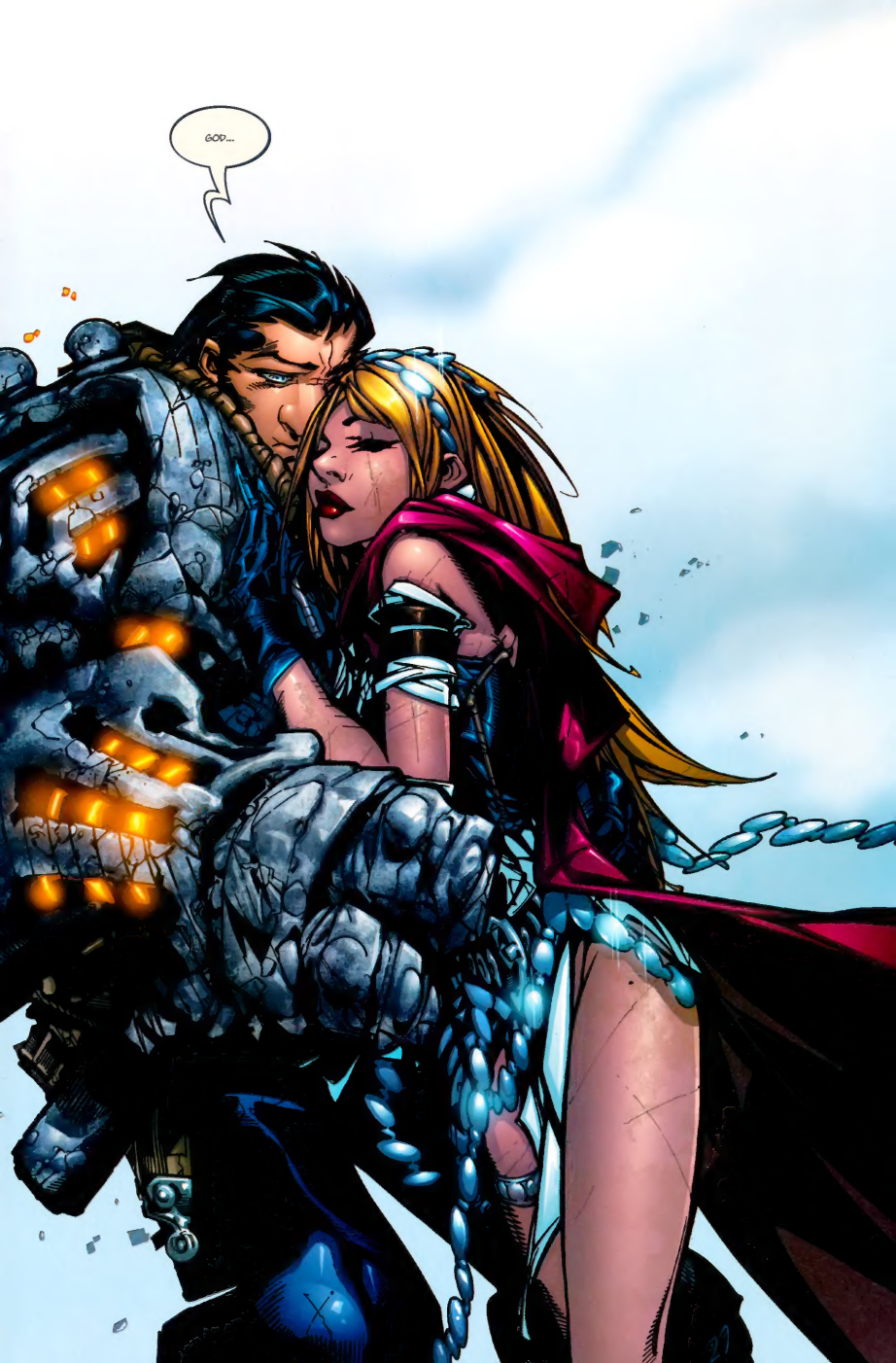
YE COULDN'T 'AVE JUST SAID "NO?"
OUT!
THE WATER! CLOSE YOUR DAMPERS!
MY WHAT?
SHUNK
READ THE BOOK, WOULD YOU?
FLOOSH
The bullet that will kill me is not yet cast...
For I have no HEART to kill...
A heart...
FLSSSSSSSHH
How can he still have...a HEART?
Thought we could be...BROTHERS.
VIVE LA FRANCE.

BLOORCH
BY THE SPLIT ENDS... 'AT'S THE FIRST TIME I SEEN THE OL' BOY GET OUT OF A STITCH USING HIS HEAD INSTEAD OF HIS FISTS!
TWASN'T HIS HEAD THAT SAVED HIS, WAS IT?
A SHORT TIME LATER... ASTURIAS, SPAIN.
A PLACE CALLED WHAT?
"AMERICA." FOUNDED. Uh... WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING.
ACCORDING TO MAMBUTU'S CHARTS, THAT'S WHERE WE NEED TO BE TO FIND STONEHENGE.
ACROSS THE ATLANTIC? GODS... WHAT ARE WE CHASING?
I'LL TELL YOU WHEN WE GET THERE--IF WE GET THERE--
OH, YE OF LITTLE FAITH. HAVE POKER GAME, WILL TRAVEL!
COUPLE HIGHTIGHT SPANIARD SWELLS WAS FEELIN' GENEROUS WITH THEIR TICKETS OVERSEAS... ONLY THEY DINNIT KNOW IT UNTIL THEY MET US.

AMERICA! DID YOU HEAR, LASLO? AM--
MY EARS STILL WORK, TINI.
HAVE A NICE TRIP. I'M NOT--
NONSENSE. WE'LL GO TOGETHER...AND WE'LL FIND A CURE TO YOUR AILMENT. I PROMISE.
SO... FISHERMAN BLAQUESMITH RETURNS TO SEA...
'TIS BEEN TOO LONG, OL' FRIEND. MAY THE REUNION BRING PEACE.
-Ahem:- MISTER BLAQUESMITH?
WE'RE READY.

I'M READY TO DISCUSS...
...THE MATTERS OF YOUR CONCERN.

GO ON.
MANY TIMES...IN THE FACE OF DEATH...
...A BODY IS DRIVEN TO SAY THINGS ONE MIGHT NOT ORDINARILY SAY--
STANDING BEFORE A MAD MECHANICAL FRENCH GENERAL, FOR INSTANCE?
YOU... YOU DIDN'T MEAN WHAT YOU SAID?
VICTORIA... WHAT DID YOU SAY TO ME AT THE ARENA?
...
YOU KNOW WHAT I SAID.
SAY IT AGAIN... PLEASE.
COLE?


GOD...

END OF ACT TWO

NEXT: ACT THREE...*

STEAMPUNK AMERICANA

*See the letters page